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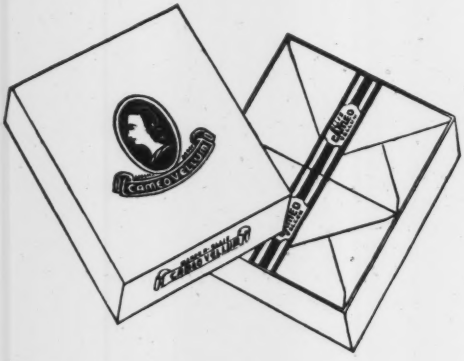

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# YEATS AND THE LANGUAGE OF SYMBOLISM

NORTHROP FRYE

IN reading any poem we have to know at least two languages: the language the poet is writing and the language of poetry itself. The former exists in the words the poet uses, the latter in the images and ideas which those words express. And just as the words of a language are a set of verbal conventions, so the imagery of poetry is a set of symbolic conventions. This set of symbolic conventions differs from a symbolic system, such as a religion or a metaphysic, in being concerned, not with a content, but with a mode of apprehension. Religions, philosophies, and other symbolic systems are as a rule presented as doctrines; poetic symbolism is a language. Sometimes a symbolic system, such as classical mythology, may lose its doctrinal content and so become purely linguistic, but this does not affect the distinction. So while poetry can be made of any account of spiritual reality because it is itself the language of spiritual reality, it does not follow that poetry represents something truer, because broader, than religion or philosophy. The French language is a much broader thing than the philosophy of Montaigne or Pascal, and we can learn French without being converted to any Frenchman's views; but the French language itself represents no truth.

Just as the teacher of a language is a grammarian, so one of the functions of the literary critic is to be a grammarian of imagery, interpreting the symbolic systems of religion and philosophy in terms of poetic language. Yeats provides a fine example of such criticism in his essay on the philosophy of Shelley's poetry, though the use of the word philosophy here is, as just said, misleading. I imagine that the greatest creative periods in art are also those in which criticism is most aware of the importance of this particular task. In Elizabethan criticism, for instance, the importance attached to symbolic grammar comes out in the mythological hand-books, the elaborate allegorical commentaries on Virgil and Ovid, and the text-books of rhetoric, in which every conceivable mode of utterance is studied and classified with what seems to us now the mere exuberance of pedantry. It may be true that as Samuel Butler said:

> . . . all a rhetorician's rules
> Teach nothing but to name his tools.

But if a critic, or for that matter a poet, cannot name his tools, the world is not likely to concede much authority to his craft. We should not entrust our cars to a mechanic who lived entirely in a world of gadgets and doo-hickeys. In any case the Elizabethan critical tradition, which, whatever one thinks of it, is certainly essential to the age of Spenserian allegory and court masque, eventually broke down. Augustan criticism had a grammatical interest in form, but its scope was far narrower, and by the Romantic period, in spite of the gigantic efforts of Coleridge, criticism was


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rapidly heading for a limbo of "appreciation," reflective *belles lettres*, and cogent comments.

The axioms and postulates of criticism cannot be taken over ready-made from theology, philosophy, or science. They have to grow out of the art which the criticism is dealing with. Hence each art has its own criticism, and whether aesthetics is a legitimate branch of philosophy or not, I do not see that a theory of beauty in general can have a direct application to any branch of criticism. When Lessing in the *Laoköon* protested against confusing the canons of the different arts, this was really the question he was raising. The importance of the question is not overthrown by historical criticism, which is a different subject altogether, and which deals with such conceptions as Baroque, Renaissance, Rococo, Gothic, Romantic, where all cultural products of a period are seen as symbols of that period. Beauty, the icon of aesthetics, is as big a stumbling-block to criticism as happiness is to morals, and it is significant that in our ordinary language about art the word is practically obsolete, having been long replaced simply by "good." For one thing, it has become sentimentalized in meaning until it is now synonymous with the particular quality of beauty more exactly described as loveliness. The reason for this is that ideas of beauty tend insensibly to become ideas of propriety and decorum. When we speak of the human body as beautiful we mean a body of someone in good physical condition between about eighteen and thirty, and when Dégas expresses interest in thick-bottomed matrons squatting in hip-baths, we confuse the shock to our sense of propriety with a shock to our sense of beauty. The same thing happens when Ibsen claims venereal disease as a subject for tragedy. The cult of beauty, then, is reactionary: it is continually setting up barriers to the conquest of experience by art, and limits the variety of expression in art wherever it can.

But with the break-down of a tradition of grammatical criticism, ideas of general beauty become the critic's chief subject-matter; hence the nineteenth century was the golden age of aesthetic criticism. Criticism reacted on art, and when critics forgot how to teach the language of poetic imagery the poets forgot how to use it, the creative counterpart of aesthetic criticism being, of course, aestheticism. This fact affected both the content and the form of late romantic poetry. The content illustrates what may be called a Berlitz approach to symbolic language, apprehending it by means of evocation and sympathetic intuition, in which the first rule of criticism is never to push the meaning of an image too far, which means never giving it a grammatical or systematic meaning. The form similarly illustrates a deliberate fragmentation of poetic experience, in which the lack of explicit grammatical pattern is less noticeable. In the larger picture the different arts, having lost their particular critiques, tend to become one another's metaphors, as music becomes a metaphor for poetry in Mallarmé. In the age we are dealing with, Ruskin alone had any real sense of a critical workshop, and yet, as he was deeply involved with an aesthetic which

continually relapses into propriety, and moral propriety at that, most of his direct influence on art was pernicious.

We shall never fully understand the nineteenth century until we realize how hampered its poets were by the lack of a coherent tradition of criticism which would have organized the language of poetic symbolism for them. This lack compelled many of them to turn to the symbolic systems available in their time to develop a poetic language out of them as best they might. Many conversions of poets to the Roman Catholic Church were obviously connected with the possibility of finding their language in the iconography of that Church. Other poets turned like Swinburne to a pagan mythology, still others, like Wagner and the early Yeats, to a national one; some worked out mythologies or metaphysics of their own, Poe's *Eureka* being an example only slightly less bizarre than Yeats' *Vision*. Connected with the same situation was the growing influence of occult systems in poetic thought, especially in France and Germany. The occult tradition, stemming as it did partly from Swedenborg and St. Martin in the West and partly from an increasing flow of information about Hindu and Buddhist philosophies, was especially attractive because it seemed to hint more clearly at a universal language of symbolism. This tradition comes to its climax near the end of the century with Madame Blavatsky's huge *Secret Doctrine*, after which the growth of the scientific study of comparative religion and psychoanalysis took the whole question out of the palsied hands of literary critics. Madame Blavatsky may well have been, like Paracelsus, a good deal of a charlatan. Henley said of her: "Of course she gets up fraudulent miracles, but a woman of genius has to do something." Yet *The Secret Doctrine*, whatever else it is, is a very remarkable essay on the morphology of symbols, and the charlatanism of its author is less a reflection on her than on the age that compelled her to express herself in such devious ways.

Most of the minor poets, however, followed the romantic and aesthetic path, and this was true of the "Cheshire Cheese" group with whom Yeats was first associated. This group included Lionel Johnson and Ernest Dowson, with Wilde and Francis Thompson on the fringes, and their technique of relentless beautifying appears in much of Yeats' early work, notably "The Secret Rose" and the first version of *Oisin*. He is following the same models also in those poems of escape, like *The Land of Heart's Desire*, which are aesthetic anti-Victorian melodramas with beauty as hero and duty as villain. And in his transformation of a tough, humorous, and extravagant Irish mythology into nostalgic romance and worn-out Court of Love situations, as in *Deirdre*, we can see the poet to whom William Morris said: "You write my sort of poetry." Many features of the aesthetic attitude, too, remained with Yeats all his life. He never lost a sense of the beautiful which was closely allied to a sense of propriety. He never became reconciled to the realistic explorers of art, never understood what Dégas and Ibsen were driving at, and even in his *Last Poems*, when his practice

is increasingly contradicting his theory, he is still talking about art in terms of conventional idealized forms, in which the intellectual symmetry of Pythagoras or St. Thomas grows into the organic symmetry of Phidias and Michelangelo.

And yet the deliberate pull of Yeats' genius away from the Cheshire Cheese is unmistakable. Everyone who has studied the early poems has barked his shins over the later revisions of them, and pondered the curiously tasteless blunders which Yeats occasionally makes in these revisions. Cheshire Cheese poetry, like romantic poetry in general, only more so, depends on an evocative and intuitive approach to the significance of poetic imagery; hence it depends, not on things, but on qualifications of things, not on a pattern of images, but on a background of attributes. The emphasis in such poetry therefore falls on carefully composed epithets and radioactive adjectives. Now when Yeats, in "The Sorrow of Love," changes "curd-pale moon" to "brilliant moon," the change from the noisy to the quiet epithet throws a much greater weight on the noun, and indicates that "moon" has acquired a systematic and grammatical meaning in Yeats' poetry. Other changes are motivated by a desire to tighten up the syntax, which in a euphuistic poetry of epithets tends to become flaccid, because the connective tissues of sentences emphasize continuity of meaning rather than radiating suggestiveness. The reasons for Yeats' wanting to rewrite his early poems instead of merely writing them off are not clear, but one guess may be hazarded. Yeats is one of the growing poets: his technique, his ideas, his attitude to life, are in a constant state of revolution and metamorphosis. He belongs with Goethe and Beethoven, not with the artists who simply unfold, like Blake and Mozart. This phenomenon of metamorphic growth, which must surely have reached its limit in Picasso, seems to be comparatively new in the arts, and so a somewhat unwelcome characteristic to Yeats himself, who preferred the more traditional unfolding rhythm. Perhaps it too is a by-product of the break-down of criticism. Dante unfolds into the *Divine Comedy* because the grammar of its symbolism is present in the culture of his time; Goethe grows into the second part of *Faust* because he has to rediscover the conventions of symbolism for himself. Yeats, then, may have been compelled to "grow" by a personal search for symbols, and if so, his revisions may signify a desire to force the developing body of his work into a single unfolding unit.

## II

Yeats looked for a language of symbols in two obvious places: in the traditional mythology of Ireland, including both its heroic saga and its popular folk-lore, and in the occultism of his own day which had a doctrine in theosophy and a discipline in spiritualism. The association between the occult and the native Irish is of long standing, and Yeats' determination to have Blavatsky, Swedenborg, and F. W. H. Myers rubbing shoulders with Fionn and Cuchulain is not due to a merely personal crochet. He

looked in this mixture for a mythological pattern which, though not that of traditional Christianity, would be reconcilable with it, in the sense of being another illustration of the same total imaginative apprehension of reality. We are not surprised, then, to find Yeats forming counterparts to Christian ideas out of his own myths. His first important play was *The Countess Cathleen*, produced amid vociferous boos at the turn of the century. The story concerns a character who is really a female and Irish Jesus, redeeming the world by selling her soul to the devil and then cheating the devil by the purity of her nature, very much as in the pre-Anselm theory of the Atonement. As Yeats calmly remarks in a note, the story illustrates "one of the supreme parables of the world," and it is perhaps not astonishing that some of his more orthodox contemporaries, however foolishly they may have expressed their objections, felt that all was not well. The dying king of the theatre has often proved a formidable rival of the dying god of the Church, and the audience may have realized more clearly than Yeats himself that something anti-Christian was taking shape, the traditional cult of Dionysius and Oedipus revived to overthrow that of Christ. We shall return to this in a moment.

The cult of the legend is apt to lead to archaism, to sentimentalizing a certain period in the past. If we believe with Swinburne that the world has grown gray with the breath of Christ, we are making a historical Fall out of Christianity and a historical Golden Age out of the Classical era. Consequently we shall tend to think of the creative imagination as concerned with reviving the faded splendours of classical culture, which will lead to a good deal of faking and antiquing when we come to deal directly with that culture. The same is true of the romantic medievalism of Morris and Chesterton, where the Fall is placed in the Renaissance or Reformation, as it is by Ruskin, who actually calls the Renaissance a Fall in *The Stones of Venice*. The late romantic milieu of the early Yeats was full of historical myths of this kind and Yeats inherited a view of history which stems from a writer whom he consistently despised—Carlyle. The age of heroic action and imaginative splendour, according to this dialectic, died with the age of faith, and since then self-consciousness, Puritanism, rationalism, mercantilism, and all the spectral ghosts of abstraction have destroyed the individual and the supernatural at once, and left a thin, bloodless, envious, sedentary, sceptical, materialistic, *bourgeois* sissy as the typical man of our own age. In his early essay on Spenser, for instance, Yeats is so preoccupied with this myth that he hardly succeeds in getting anything intelligent said about Spenser; and he never outgrew it, partly because of what seems to me the very considerable influence of D. H. Lawrence on his later poetry. Ireland thus comes to mean for him among other things a region sheltered from the worst fury of abstraction and metropolitan materialism, where culture still has roots, where communal art-forms like the drama are still possible, and where the brave man and the beautiful woman still command respect.

When Spengler's *Decline of the West* appeared after the First World War it owed its popularity to the fact that it gave both complete expression to a myth which had been widely accepted for a century and an intelligible account of that myth. Cultures were, Spengler said, organisms, subject to the organic rhythms of growth, maturation, and decay, and our present metropolitan civilization is a "Western" culture in the same stage of decline that classical culture was in at the time of the Punic Wars. From 1917 on, Yeats was absorbed by his *Vision*, a complicated occult system based on a twenty-eight-phase lunar cycle and a system of double cones, which was dictated to him by spirits who worked through his wife's gift for automatic writing, and Spengler's was evidently one of the books these spirits read, or possibly wrote. Spengler does not postulate a *general* cyclic movement in history, but his tables of cultures use the names of the four seasons, and if our time is the "winter" of Western culture a returning spring is at any rate suggested. The *Vision* has an interesting passage on the influence of Frobenius on Spengler which suggests, I think correctly, that a general cyclic theory was actually in Spengler's mind. In any case the general cycle is in Vico, one of Spengler's predecessors, who had also a more direct influence on Yeats through Croce, as he had on Joyce.

The *Vision* presents an astrological theory of history, according to which history moves alternately through "antithetical" and "primary" cycles, the former being subjective, aristocratic, violent, and antinomian, the latter objective, democratic, self-sacrificing, and theistic. Each cycle embraces two millennia. The Classical period from 2000 B.C. to the Christian era was an "antithetical" cycle, and our own Christian cycle is a "primary" one. A cycle is at its height halfway through, at the fifteenth phase, when it is also nearest the opposite pole. Thus the Christian era was at its most antithetical in a Byzantine period, in Yeats a quasi-historical fairyland reminding us of Lawrence's Etruscan myth. When Byzantium fell its culture took root in the West, producing the antithetical Renaissance civilization which had always made so strong an appeal to Yeats. Castiglione's *Courtier*, the great text-book of antithetical discipline, was one of his favourite books, and he felt that his pantheon of Irish heroes, Burke being an obvious member, had a deep spiritual affinity with the proud and aristocratic ideals of the age of chivalry, of the noble horseman who casts a cold eye on the squalor of life and death alike, and leaves his servants to do his "living" for him, to quote the famous tag from *Axël* that Yeats kept repeating all his life.

We are now in the last century of the Christian era, at the very nadir of primary abstraction, and are approaching the return of an antithetical age. Like Nietzsche, Yeats prophesies the time when Christianity will give place to an opposing culture of proud beauty and invincible violence, the reign of the Antichrist now slouching toward Bethlehem to be born, of the centaur whose humanity is inseparable from the brute, of Shelley's Demogorgon who awakens from the earth as the "mummy wheat" of the

preceding classical culture begins to sprout again. The dove and the virgin are to go and Leda and the swan are to come back, in the form of the watchful and ironic heron of the Irish marshes and his fanatical priestess. The new birth is to be however a welter of blood and pain, full of the screams of the new birds of prey who replace the dove of peace, like the leaderless falcon turning in the widening gyre, and full of the hound voices of furies in pursuit of blood. Like Spengler, though for slightly different reasons, Yeats sees in the fascist cult of brutal violence something profoundly characteristic of our own time and of the immediate future.

He had to talk himself into this, for he saw fascism first as it really is, when Ireland was occupied by the Black and Tans. Later, when Wyndham Lewis was publicizing Hitler and Pound Mussolini, and Eliot was issuing encyclicals to the faithful informing them that the people who think are now reading Charles Maurras, Yeats had a passing dalliance with the Irish Blue Shirts. But there are other features of this new civilization more genuinely attractive to him. As in Lawrence, the Christ of the new era is to be a sexual rather than a virginal god, and in many of Yeats' last poems the sex act, again as in Lawrence, practically becomes the basis of a new fertility ritual. Yeats' preference of the heroic virtues to the Christian ones comes out, too, in his plays *Calvary* and *Resurrection*, where the historical Jesus appears as a rather stupefied and bemused figure, turning the wheel of time towards the surrender of human powers to a dehumanized God.

Yet his celebrations of a new birth are enforced, to use a technical term from the *Vision*, and all through his work runs the melancholy of the *Götterdämmerung*. It is a bitter Kilkenny cat-fight that Yeats makes out of history, the hero and the god, the young man and the old man, destroying one another as the gyres of history grind together on a common axis. Oedipus kills his father and Cuchulain his son, and the hero of *Purgatory* kills both as a sacrifice to his mother, his feelings for whom are a remarkably repulsive mixture of incest and necrophily. In *On Baile's Strand*, Cuchulain after killing his son wanders mad into a world of chaos, like Lear on the heath. But unlike Lear he does not recover his humanity, and only a fool and a blind man are on the stage when the curtain falls. The fool is the last phase of the lunar cycle in the *Vision*, and the blind man I take to represent the dark moonless night that follows it, the existence of which Yeats' "instructors" appear to have overlooked.

In searching for a new language of symbols, then, Yeats was to a great extent simply fulfilling the romantic tradition from which he had started, his final position being simply a more systematic expression of the romanticism of Nietzsche and Lawrence. Even his Byzantium, the spiritual source of the fifteenth-century culture that was the model of the pre-Raphaelites, betrays its romantic origin. His conception of the great man also falls well within the romantic orbit. One of the fundamental conceptions of early romantic mythology is that the revolutionary political situation of its time is a recreation of the rebellion of Prometheus, the

Titanic ally of man, against an abstract tyranny represented by a sky-god. The sky-god is a metropolitan imperialist as his opponent is an earth-bound anarchist; hence the eruption of Promethean heroes in romantic poetry, the Kossuths and Kosciuskos and Bolivars and Garibaldis who fight for the freedom of all humanity in a decentralized or nationalist form. This national aspect of the romantic Messiah myth is especially congenial to countries like Ireland, or like Mexico as Lawrence saw it, where national and radical ideas are closely linked.

In Yeats the sky-god worshipper belongs to a rabble, a pack of curs snarling at the heels of an aloof and aristocratic hero representing the antithetical values of Irish culture, Parnell, for example, or Wilde, or Synge (though Synge is actually a primary type), or perhaps himself. In an aloof and aristocratic civilization such heroes would be leaders, but in a primary one like our own the noble animal is pulled down by the cur, and his heroism fulfils itself, like the setting sun, in the waning glamour of the lost cause. In the rewritten ending of *The King's Threshold* the heroic poet dies having maintained his defiance both of the tyrant king and of the leprous sky-god, Blake's Jehovah, whom he incarnates, but with no other resolution of the conflict than his own death. And in Yeats' last play, *The Death of Cuchulain*, the ignoble and helpless collapse of his favourite hero will give some idea of the imaginative nihilism that the poet's mind finally reached. In Yeats as in most great romantics the cult of the hero turns out to be a cult of the death of the hero, an Eroica symphony with a funeral march at its heart.

## III

The language of early romantic symbolism is a Kantian language, by which I do not mean that it is founded on Kant, but that it implies a popularized metaphysic with predominantly Kantian features. The romantic poet splits reality into a world of experience and a world of perception, the former world, Kant's noumenon, being interpreted by poetry and the latter or phenomenal world being the only object of rational knowledge. The gap between rational and poetic knowledge accounts for the importance of suggestion and evocation in romantic art, and for the distrust of didactic qualities. For the poet as well as the reasoner, however, nature is the vehicle of interpretation, hence nature to the poet is, as in Baudelaire's "*Correspondances*," a shrine of mysterious oracles; and in the darkness of the noumenal world, where there must yet be direct contact with nature, we depend less on the expanded pupils of vision than on the twitching whiskers of feeling.

But as romantic art develops, popularized Kant becomes popularized Schopenhauer, and as the phenomenal world is the object of consciousness, the noumenal world tends to become associated with the sub-conscious, a world of will underlying the world of idea. Such a world of will, being sub-moral and sub-intellectual, may from the point of view of consciousness be described as evil and brutal, hence romantic art becomes infused with

all the symbols of the "romantic agony": sadism, Satanism, pessimism, the cults of the beauty of pain, the religion of blasphemy, the curse of genius, and, above all, the malignant grinning female, the Medusa, the Sphinx, La Gioconda, La Belle Dame sans Merci, or whatever her name may be, who presides over so many romantic love-affairs, and has affected Yeats' relations with the beautiful Maud Gonne. The world as will is, of course, an essential part of the order of nature, hence it is really a hyperphysical world, and in no sense a spiritual one.

The romantic conception of the hyperphysical world appears in Freud's psychological myth of a sub-conscious libido and a censoring consciousness. Freud himself has noted the resemblance of his metaphysic to Schopenhauer's, though not the significance of that resemblance. The influence of Freud on Yeats was indirect, but there was more of it than Yeats realized, some of it coming again through Lawrence. It is reflected in his choice of Oedipus as the symbol of the antithetical Christ about to be reborn. More immediate were the Darwinian developments of the same idea: a glance at Hardy is enough to show how easily Darwin and Schopenhauer fit together. The evolutionary dialectic destroyed the separateness of created forms, and reduced all life to a single interlocking family: even, one may say, and Samuel Butler did say, a single super-organism, a known God who is also the world of will and life-force. Thus in this conception of a hyperphysical world the old seventeenth-century doctrine of the *anima mundi* is reabsorbed into literary symbolism, though of course with a very different context, and ideas of race memory and telepathy appear as by-products of it.

In Irish mythology there is a world of gods, the Tuatha Dé Danaan, who were driven underground by man long ago and now inhabit a world antipodal to our own, whose "Beltane" (May 1) is our "Samhain" (November 1); a world of fairies or Sidhe living in the Tir-na-n-Og, the country of eternal youth, where personality has much more of that aloof and aristocratic spirit that marks the antithetical, the classical and Nietzschean, idea of the mingling of the divine and human, as opposed to the primary or Christian view of it. This myth of gods buried under the tyranny of consciousness, nature, and reason, in Joyce the Finnegan concealed under the blanket of HCE, corresponds to the Greek myth of the Titans, of whom Prometheus was one, and neatly fits the metaphysical myth we have been tracing. A remark of Blavatsky's that our world has another attached to it at the North Pole, forming a dumbbell-shaped cosmos, is quoted in *The Trembling of the Veil*. And as, according to all romantic presuppositions, the source of the mythopoeic faculty is the sub-conscious, Yeats endeavours, he tells us in *Per Amica Silentia Lunae*, to sink his mind below consciousness into the stream of the *anima mundi*, in order to become a medium of a creative power which has its basis in the organically traditional, the genus or race, rather than the individual, and which will bring the ancestral gods and myths of that race out of a stream of racial memory.

In a rather silly play, *The Hour-Glass*, an exponent of sceptical materialism is told by an angel that he has to accept this antipodal fairy-world or else. He is given an hour to produce a believer in it, and an hour-glass, from which the play takes its name, appears on the stage. This hour-glass, the simplest possible emblem of time, is, though Yeats apparently has tried not to notice the fact, the fundamental symbol of his own *Vision*, the double gyre with time passing from one cone to the other, and reversing its position when the progress is complete. In this play, however, it represents the relation of the fairy-world to our own. This relation obviously cannot be historical, like the classical-Christian double gyre; yet the fairies to some extent share a common time and space with us, for they live, like the spirits in Dante's Purgatory, on the other side of our own world, however we interpret the word "side."

We can understand where this world is if we think of spiritualism, which, in spite of its name, investigates on scientific principles a world not of spirits but of nature, a world where the conceptions of time, space, substance, and form appear still to operate, and which seems to be an essential part of the *anima mundi*. Thus the hour-glass really represents the gyre of organic life which goes from birth to death, and then, invisible to the organic world but still within nature, from death to rebirth. The idea of rebirth is essential if the conception is to retain its hour-glass figure. In the *Vision* two double gyres, the four faculties, make up the Spenglerian movement of visible time or history, and two others at right angles to them, the four principles, make up this other cycle of life, death, and rebirth. Yeats gives a detailed account of the half-dozen stages that the dead man goes through on his way to rebirth. One of them consists in reliving, sometimes for centuries, the passionate moments of one's life, as Swift lives through the loves of Stella and Vanessa in *The Words upon the Window Pane*. The chief function of this world however is expiatory or purgatorial, reminding us again of Dante's Purgatory, on top of which is the Garden of Eden from whence all seeds of life fall back into our world, though of course in Dante this cyclic movement does not affect human souls.

The idea of reincarnation came to Yeats from oriental sources through theosophy. A much better account than he gives of the progress from death to rebirth is in *The Tibetan Book of the Dead*, as it is called in the English translation, where the world inhabited is called Bardo. In the Japanese No plays, too, which so deeply affected Yeats' dramatic technique, the Bardo-world is the normal setting. The contrast between the gentleness of the Japanese plays and the ferocity of Yeats is curious. In one of them, *Nishikigi*, two dead lovers are reunited by a priest; in Yeats' *Dreaming of the Bones* two Irish lovers must be forever separated because of their treachery to Ireland. *The Hour-Glass* is said to have frightened a man into attending mass for some weeks, and in *The Dreaming of the Bones* the evangelist again appears with a knuckle-duster, evidently prepared to adapt the old threats to a new priestcraft. In another No play, *Hagoromo*, a

fairy, in order to get back a head-dress a priest has stolen from her, teaches him the dance of the phases of the moon. She is a harmless and pretty creature, a Sally Rand who has lost her fan, and it is hardly likely that her lessons had anything of the Procrustean pedantry of Yeats' garrulous and opinionated spooks. In a third, *Kamusaka*, a dead brigand is reconciled to the young man who kills him; in Yeats' *Purgatory* (an ironic title if ever there was one, though it is true that a similar irony is found in *Hamlet*), the double murder already mentioned is combined with the idea of an ancestral curse operating with irresistible power in both this life and the next.

Of course Yeats had read too much mysticism not to postulate a final deliverance from these gyres, a "thirteenth cone" or sphere of the pure present where time and space are transcended. But in spite of this theoretical escape, the *Vision* is a depressing book. Perhaps Yeats is right in believing that he had developed special faculties for communicating with some unknown but objective type of intelligence. But if his "spiritual instructors" have an objective existence, all one can say is that Yeats reminds us of those unfortunate wretches who turn themselves into walking crystal sets by getting manganese dust on their silver fillings, and are thus exposed to a cataract of ethereal drivel that most of us can, up to a point, shut out. Everything that is interesting and valuable in the *Vision* is directly connected with its subjective aspect. For one thing, it suggests what seems to me on other grounds highly probable: that a good deal of our thinking is elaborated from sub-conscious diagrams. This comes out not only in the geometrical figures we use, "a point of view," "a sphere of influence," "a line of action," and so on, but also in the spatial implications of the most ordinary particles: "beside," "between," "on the other hand," and the like. The *Vision* begins by dividing all human types among twenty-eight phases, and even this, for all its arbitrary strait-jacketing, might have become the sub-conscious foundation of an art-form like the one represented in Chaucer's company of twenty-nine pilgrims, who evidently seem to be something of a perfect circle of planetary and humorous temperament. It is a pity that the qualities which enabled Chaucer to transform his perfect circle into great art were qualities that Yeats felt he ought to distrust—characterization and comedy.

I have laid such stress on the *Vision* because it does give an account, for better or worse, of the symbolic structure which underlies Yeats' poetry from at least 1917 onward. And from what we have said about the romantic nature of that poetry, it is clear that the *Vision* is among other things one of the grammars of romantic symbolism. It presents a physical or phenomenal world apprehended by the consciousness and a hyperphysical world apprehended by the sub-conscious, and in so doing it preserves the original romantic cult of nature which led to identifying spiritual and hyperphysical reality. It does not get, except in theory, to any order above that of nature or to any mode of consciousness in which the gap between subject and object is bridged. The poles of the *Vision*, Phases

One and Fifteen, are a purely objective condition of self-abnegation and a purely subjective one of complete beauty respectively, both of which are superhuman incarnations. And as the fundamental process in nature as we ordinarily perceive it is the cycle, the *Vision* reflects a romantic pessimism founded on a conception of cyclic fatality, such as we find in Lawrence, in Spengler, in Nietzsche, who also tried to formulate a doctrine of recurrence, and in many others.

It remains finally to compare Yeats' symbolism with that of some earlier poet who knew a greater tradition than the romantic one, a comparison which may involve some rather technical points of symbolic grammar.

## IV

Of pre-romantic English poets, the two who had the most formative influence on Yeats were also the two greatest linguists of symbolism in English literature—Blake and Spenser. Yeats and his friend Ellis undertook an edition of Blake in 1889, which appeared in three volumes in 1893. They approached Blake however from the wrong side of Blavatsky: that is, they had already acquired a smattering of occultism, and they expected to find in Blake an occult system or secret doctrine instead of a poetic language. But what Blake needed most in 1889 was a clean, complete, and accurate text, and neither of these young men—both were in their twenties—had any real knowledge of editing. Again, Blake, though a very systematic thinker, sharply warns his reader against what he calls "mathematic form," and this includes all the Euclidean paraphernalia of diagrams, figures, tables of symbols and the like, which inevitably appear when symbolism is treated as a dead language. The result is an over-schematized commentary full of false symmetries, which, itself more difficult to understand than Blake, is still further confused by centrifugal expositions of Boehme and Swedenborg. As Yeats very truly remarks in the course of this work: "The student of occultism . . . should particularly notice Blake's association of black with darkness." But Yeats tells us in his essay on Spenser that Spenser's symbols kept welling up again in his mind long after he had forgotten having met them in Spenser, and it is not possible that the Blake whom he had studied so exhaustively can have failed to influence him in the same way.

Complex as Blake's symbolism is, it is at least uncluttered by all the chain-of-being apparatus of eons, emanations, world-souls, and demi-urges which Yeats inherited from the occult tradition. In Blake the world as mental reality, which is inside the human mind, and the world as physical appearance, which is outside it, present a contrast in which the latter is a shadow or reflection of the former, and thus a sort of parody or inversion of it. In the physical world man is an isolated individual centre of perception; in the spiritual world he is identical with a universal circumference of perception, a titanic man whom Blake calls Albion. In the physical world man is aware of an antithesis of divine Creator and human creature;

in the spiritual world both of these disappear into the unity of God and Man which is Jesus. In the physical world man seems to be in the centre of a chain of being halfway between matter and God; in the spiritual world Man has pulled this chain into his own body, as Zeus threatens to do in the Iliad. The real form of the mineral world is that of a city; that of the vegetable world a tree of life; that of the animal world a single body; and that of the human world the real presence of the God-Man Jesus: and all these forms are one form.

Hence in Blake's symbolism we find a series of antitheses expressing the contrast of the two worlds. There is a tree of life and a tree of mystery, a city of God and a city of destruction, and so on. This antithetical pattern is found in Yeats too. The two trees appear in the poem of that name, and hints of the two cities in the Byzantium poems, though in the famous "Sailing to Byzantium" it is actually Shelley who takes the lead as Yeats stands in the tomb of Galla Placidia in Ravenna, a cavern of the type that Spengler calls the "prime symbol" of Byzantine culture, and sees in the dome of many-coloured glass above him a reflection of something very like the New Testament city of living stones.

In order to pass from the physical world to the spiritual world in Blake, man's mind has to blow up and turn inside out: in more sober language, man has to use his imagination and train himself, with the help of works of art, to reverse the natural perspective. Blake's symbol for this turning inside out is the vortex, an image rather similar to Yeats' gyre, though the difference is more significant than the resemblance. In Yeats the spiritual life in this world is, again like Dante's Purgatory, a gigantic cone, a mountain or tower encircled by a winding stair spiralling upward through one life after another until it reaches an apex. The source of the idea is not Dante, but a childhood memory of smoke rising from the whirling spools of a "pern mill" so that it looked as though it were coming out of a burning mountain. This cone image supplies the titles of two of Yeats' later books, *The Tower* and *The Winding Stair*.

But if we turn to the early work we find that the chief symbol there is not that of Dante's Purgatory, but that of his Paradise, the multifoliate rose, the flaming tree of life or transfigured cross which is the permanent spiritual form of eternity, the spiral which has lost its progressive or temporal shape. Evidently, then, the thought of passing from the apex of the purgatorial cone into eternity predominated in Yeats' mind up to about 1917, after which the idea of rebirth from the apex, which, as we have seen, is also hinted at in Dante, begins to displace it, though never completely.

Dante puts the Garden of Eden at the apex of his Purgatory, and both Blake and Spenser also have a lower Paradise in their symbolism, associated with the moon and with the Bardo-world of the dead and unborn, which is yet a hyperphysical world and a part of the cyclic order of nature. Blake calls it Beulah and Spenser the Gardens of Adonis. As both poets are Protestants, neither gives it a purgatorial function, but in both it is a place

of rebirth to some extent. Blake's Beulah, the more sharply realized conception, has two gates, a lower gate of rebirth and an upper gate of escape, and in Blake's symbolism the crisis or vortex of vision comes at the upper gate; Spenser's *Faerie Queene* ends with a similar crisis at the corresponding place, the sphere of the moon, in the *Cantos of Mutabilitie*.

Yeats' *Vision* is, from Blake's point of view, a vision of the physical world, which Blake calls Generation, and of a hyperphysical world or Beulah with the upper limit sealed off. His account of this cyclic world, as such, has much in common with Blake. Blake too has a historical cycle in which the young man and the old man, whom he calls Orc and Urizen, kill each other off, and a still larger cycle of death and rebirth which he presents in *The Mental Traveller*. Yeats' claim that his *Vision* explains *The Mental Traveller*, or more accurately expounds the same aspect of symbolism, is correct enough. The two poets also make a very similar use of the moon and a lunar cycle of twenty-eight phases. Blake's lower and upper gates correspond to Yeats' Phases One and Fifteen, the phase of total surrender and the phase of complete beauty, both poets being indebted to Homer's cave of the nymphs, and Porphyry's commentary on it, for the conception.

Now the thing that seals off the upper limit of Yeats' *Vision*, again from Blake's point of view, is the uncreative mental condition in which Yeats attained his vision. He stands at his own Phase One, in a state of passivity so abject that he cannot even write his own book, and sees his aloof and aristocratic ideal above him, impossibly remote and lost in the turning stars. An active mind would, on the contrary, be the circumference of such a vision, which would then be lifted up into the spiritual or mental world and so become a created or dramatic form, as Chaucer's circle of pilgrims does. The upper limit of the present *Vision*, Phase Fifteen, the perfect antithetical self, would in that case become the lower limit, the aspect in which the vision appears to the physical world. We should then have what Yeats calls the creative mind and the mask, the mental or imaginative reality of the vision itself and the external form in which it appears to others. And just as Blake, when he spoke of his poems as dictated, was talking about a state of the most active concentration, so Yeats never entrusted anything except the *Vision* to his spirits; everywhere else he is the active circumference and not the passive centre of what he is doing. We should expect, therefore, to find all the rest of his work turning on this conception of creative mind and mask, the opposition of mental reality and physical appearance, the latter, the mask, having all of that proud and aristocratic aloofness which Yeats so valued in the world of appearance.

This is certainly what we get in the essay *Per Amica Silentia Lunae*, the bottle out of which the smoky genie of the *Vision* emerged. There, Yeats sees the artist, as an ordinary or natural man in the physical world, using his creative genius to visualize a mode of existence as different as possible

from the one forced on him by his own shortcomings. Thus Morris, a blundering and tactless man, creates an imaginative world of precise and exquisite taste, and the ferociously irascible Landor expresses himself in an art of languid gentleness. The artist searches for a mask, originally to conceal his natural self, but ultimately to reveal his imaginative self, the body of his art. The conception comes of course from drama, perhaps partly from Synge's subtle analysis of such a personal mask in *The Playboy of the Western World*, and it underlies Yeats' own dramatic theory. In his ideal play the audience is select, the actors masked, and the theme traditional and symbolic, so that the outward form of the drama preserves, like the Japanese play from which it is derived, the mask of the heroic and aristocratic virtues. But in this theory of drama the poet must find a common ground with his audience in conventional themes and symbols which emerge from traditions embedded in racial and sub-conscious memories. The true initiates in the audience, when they pierce the mask, find themselves within a mental form which is at once the dramatist's mind and the *anima mundi* of their common sub-consciousness. It is clear, then, that the mask does not relate only to the poet's own life, to his quarrel with himself as Yeats says: if the mask is to reveal anything effective, it must also be to some extent the mask of the age. Hence the great poets of every generation will be those who can identify a personal mask with a historical one.

Thus romanticism, on Yeats' theory, would arise as a mask or countervision, an imaginative protest, against the industrial revolution, and end by being a form in which the culture of the industrial revolution expresses itself. Similarly with the general conspectus of Yeats' thought: modern Italian philosophy with the stress laid on its fascist elements, the Japanese *samurai* code, Spengler's theory of history, Lawrence's primitivism, Nietzsche's cult of the heroic superman, Irish nationalism, the personal influence of Ezra Pound, and the attempt to reach through the viscera deeper truths than reason knows. This also forms a mask or opposed vision for what to Yeats and the others seemed the essential shortcomings of our age: a cult of mediocre vulgarity and a lack of nobility and heroism. The Yeatsian drama is a curious example of this imaginative opposition. We remember its characteristics: an intimate impersonality, directly addressed to a small audience by the dramatist, full of traditional symbolism, stripped to the barest essentials of costume, scenery, and lighting, tragic or at least melancholy in tone, reflecting aristocratic ideals, and with all individuality of character subordinated to a unity of theme. This dramatic form is, point for point, the exact opposite of the chief dramatic form of our age, the movie, with its vast unselected audience and its comic or sentimental realistic spectacle-form which has no dramatist and in which the private lives of the actors are on the whole more interesting than the play they are in.

But there is one point that Yeats never gets clear in his mind, except

in one play called *The Unicorn from the Stars*, and for that very reason we must get it clear. Once a poet finds his mask, and it becomes the outward form of his *creative* life, it loses all real connection with his natural life. Art is not autotherapy: Morris did not cure his tactlessness by writing romances about people with plenty of tact. The poet, by presenting us with a vision of nobility and heroism, detaches that vision from our ordinary lives. He thus works in a direction exactly opposite to that of the political leader who insists on trying to attach it, and so perverts its nature, as fascism perverted the Nietzschean gospel of heroic virtue into the most monstrous negation of it that the world has ever seen. Siegfried may be a genuine enough heroic ideal in Wagner; but whenever anyone attempts to act like Siegfried, he instantly becomes an Alberich. The artist, of course, is always, like Narcissus, apt to become enamoured with the reflecting illusion of his own mask. Yeats himself did not possess every kind of high intelligence, and some affectations resulting from a pedantic streak in his make-up led him into a certain amount of social and political dithering. But for all that we should not be too quick to plaster a fascist label on Yeats' myth merely because a conspiracy of thugs happened to debase that myth instead of some other one. We come back here to our original point that poetic symbolism is language and not truth, a means of expression and not a body of doctrine, not something to look at but something to look and speak through, a dramatic mask. "The poet," said Sir Philip Sidney, "never affirmeth": when he does affirm he not only ceases to be a poet, but is as likely to be wrong as anyone else.

Yeats began his career with a set of romantic values and an intuition, recorded on the first page of his *Collected Poems*, that "words alone are certain good." As he went on, his romantic values consolidated into a tragic mask, through which we hear voices full of terror, cruelty, and a dreadful beauty, voices of the malignant ghosts of the dead repeating their passionate crimes. No one can deny that a tragic and terrible mask is the obvious reflection of our age; nor is it an easy mask to wear, since it is not for those who take refuge either in moral outrage or in facile bravado. But as it begins to settle on the creator of lovely and fragile Victorian poetry a new exuberance comes into the voice. In Yeats' early poems we find neither youth nor age, but an after-dinner dream of both; in the *Last Poems* the lusts of youth break out beside the "old man's eagle mind" flying far above the conflicts of illusion. For while illusion enslaves, vision emancipates, and even the thought of death in a dying world seems a buoyant thought, a defiant upstream leap of the elderly salmon returning to the place of seed.

In the early play *The King's Threshold* a poet goes on a hunger strike at a king's court because he is excluded from the high table where the bishops and councillors sit. But the issue is not fairly presented: the poet does not want mere equality with others; he wants to be recognized as himself the true king, the creator of social values whose praise of gold

inspires others to strut about under gold crowns. Like Milton's Samson, or the Jesus of whom Samson was a prototype, he is a tragic hero to his followers and the buffoon of a Philistine carnival; yet the tragedy ends in triumph and the carnival in confusion. In one version the king admits that he has usurped the poet's title and surrenders; in another the poet starves; but in both versions what the poet says is:

> And I would have all know that when all falls
> In ruin, poetry calls out in joy,
> Being the scattering hand, the bursting pod,
> The victim's joy among the holy flame,
> God's laughter at the shattering of the world.

# JOHN DEWEY'S CONCEPTION OF NATURE

D. B. Savan

THERE are two quite opposite poles in philosophy, and most philosophers gravitate toward one or the other. Around the one cluster the philosopher's philosophers, the men like Aristotle and Kant, whose thought is like a carefully planned building. The structure is visible for some distance as we approach, and there are obvious evidences of strenuous endeavours after order and careful design. The proportions are exactly measured. The foundations and walls are solid, sturdy, and simple. There are no vain and frivolous ornaments, no wings or extensions added as afterthoughts. The very size and strength of the building give it grandeur. Obviously it will stand firm for many years against weather and fashion. Many who approach turn back without entering, because the doors will open only to one who has learned a long string of strange harsh passwords. And anyhow, the exterior of the building leads most people to suppose that there can be nothing very exciting inside.

Around the other pole gather everyman's philosophers. Men such as Plato, Augustine, Pascal, and Nietzsche, who write, usually very well, about life and love and death, about education and art and the cosmos, who speak of the fears, hopes, and troubles which touch everyman most intimately. We find their buildings in the tortuous forests in which we all are lost. The architects have hidden their work so cunningly, so moulded it to the surroundings, that we are well inside before we realize that we have escaped the forest. Once within, we are amazed at the structure's sprawling extent. We wander from room to room, and no two are quite alike. The connecting hall-ways are often dimly lighted, and we stumble over the unexpected turns and stairs. We peer down dark shafts and climb almost inaccessible turrets.

John Dewey is the most eminent contemporary representative of an American tradition of everyman's philosophy, a tradition created by men like Jonathan Edwards, Benjamin Franklin, Thomas Jefferson, Henry David Thoreau, Ralph Waldo Emerson, and William James. The traditional American philosopher speaks directly and clearly to the personal ideals, convictions, and feelings of his countrymen. The historic movement of his country carried Dewey from his birthplace in Vermont west to a young and lusty Chicago. There he fought his revolutionary battles against his early European idealism, and turned to the problems which the vast industrial development of the country was bringing. He too passed through a civil war in which the methods of science and of industry were forged into a more perfect union, and opposed to the great tradition of aristocratic and transcendental truth. Although the broad outlines of his philosophic position were formulated around the turn of the century, his followers continue the struggle for his philosophy today with a fervour

matched only by that of the opposition. In philosophy, education, the social sciences, literary criticism, and notoriously at the meetings of the Conference on Science, Philosophy and Religion, Dewey's views have encountered acute and bitter criticism. He stands with all the great rationalists from Socrates to Hegel as the enemy only of what is irrational and unexamined, and yet he has been condemned as though he were a modern Cadmus, sowing a wild destructive army.

Although Dewey presents his thought, almost invariably, through an examination of experience, of knowledge, of morals, of art, or of some other facet of human conduct, his realistic position suggests another approach. Man is only a small, albeit important, part of a vast natural universe. Nature is one of philosophy's magic keys, crusted with age and powerful enough to unlock all secrets but its own. It may prove worth while to approach Dewey's philosophy through his conception of nature, and to consider what man can be or do in such a universe.

Dewey was born in 1859, in the midst of a century almost conquered by the materialist cosmology, with its bleak and brainless atoms ruled by the benevolent despotism of mathematical law. Like a savage god, this cosmology reduced the beauty of a painting, the desperation of the hunted, the sharp sweetness of a fresh-plucked apple, to the grey ash of ether vibrations, electrical excitations, and mechanical interactions. The valiant efforts of Herbert Spencer and Auguste Comte to provide a mechanical basis for progress and history were, from the outset, recognized as failures. Man's behaviour was predetermined, and man's history was a passing show as meaningless as the adventures of a butterfly.

This inexorable nature, which was taken by almost all to be the necessary consequence of mathematical physics, was energetically and unsuccessfully fought by theologians and poets from the beginning. While those who remained in their ranks became more uncompromising and more embittered, the defections to the camp of materialism increased. A small number of philosophers, originating now in the one camp and now in the other, decided that the war between scientific nature and poetic nature was unnecessary and that a negotiated peace might be arranged. The combatants, however, had become enamoured of their conflict and the peace of the philosophers seemed fantastic, not to say traitorous.

John Dewey is one of these philosopher-mediators. He aims to reconcile physical nature, social relationships, divine worship, and the unanalysed unintellectual round of our daily activities. All this he professes to do without prejudice to the dignity, uniqueness, and special value of each of these realms. Dewey's Nature is a great democratic commonwealth—not entirely unlike the United States of America. Her constitution requires no special amendments to guarantee equality and due process of law. No special act is needed to open her citizenship to whatever experience can point to, without prejudice as to present colouring, previous conditions, or future servitude. Nothing is denied a visa, not even on grounds of illiteracy,

insanity, and disease. Nature's domain includes superstition as well as science, error as well as truth, the hateful as well as the noble. Man can once again talk familiarly with God, for both are good citizens.

A nature so completely undiscriminating must accept also a great variety of categories, methods, and values. This means that the excruciating indecision of modern man is as natural as the strictly necessary causal sequences of the physical world. The barren ugliness of an eroded country-side is as natural as the violence of murder and war. The formal principles of mathematics, the struggles and deaths of living creatures, the scientific technology on which man prides himself, all are natural. Dewey wishes to recall from their unnatural limbo all those whom the scientific method had seemed to exile from the world of nature.

How can the concept of nature remain meaningful when it is so indiscriminately all-inclusive? How can we accept as equally true the sweet red rose and the vibrations into which it is resolved by physical science? How is it possible to act on moral principles or religious beliefs while at the same time recognizing the delicate balance of social, economic, and political factors which alone makes them possible? The concept of nature has been important in the past because, like all other concepts, it has been limited, exclusive, and special. Without some law or dialectic, Dewey's great commonwealth will prove to be no more than an anarchy.

Dewey escapes this difficulty, however. Although nature is undiscriminating, she does contain a dynamic principle of order. Throughout the complex of systems and classes, dominions and colonies which is nature's confederated commonwealth, runs the common constitution of historicity. Dewey, like William James, rejects a "block universe," an absolute nature. Nature as a noun is an abstraction, convenient shorthand for the endless number of verbs necessary to describe the continuum of change within which we live. To speak of Nature as such is to make a metaphysical substance out of what is in fact a plurality of events, interrelated in infinitely various ways. To say that nature is historical is to say that nature consists of the utmost variety. Everything is natural because Nature does not exist.

The regions of nature are not static substances but particular dynamic events. The factitious unity which we call the natural world consists of an unlimited number of happenings, developments, and degenerations, from the explosive trajectory of a neutron to the tortured death of nations. The hardest stone is a whirling turmoil, and the deadest planet is a fragile web of shifting forces. Like Hegel, Dewey rejects classical rationalism because it sets up abstract, formal, and unchanging laws as real and independent constituents of nature. Like Marx, he rejects classical materialism because it supposes a world of lifeless matter, devoid of quality, eternally repeating the same meaningless patterns. Like Bergson, he rejects classical empiricism because its ideas are abstractions, frozen psychological atoms, moved about like counters in an intellectual play.

History is not simple, homogeneous change. Each process has a structure. Every change, blind and undirected as it may be, nevertheless fulfils perfectly the form of a classical drama. Beginning, development, and completion is the necessary pattern of all events. There is a mighty rhythm in the physical world. There are vast cosmic seasons, and nature, like microcosmic man, has her youth and old age, her births and deaths. Dewey is formulating the implications of the revolutionary overthrow of the Nature of nineteenth-century physics. We must abandon the conception of nature as extended uniformly in all directions—a nature in which the past is indistinguishable from the future, space and time are unaffected by the physical events which they are supposed to contain, and development and decline are unscientific terms revealing man's subjective evaluations. As Dewey sees it, the differentiated and creative process which characterizes art, life, and history is equally essential in physical nature.

A natural process is an historical fact, in itself neither good nor bad. The structure of beginning, progression, and fruition does not necessarily involve moral evaluation. The ending is itself always also a beginning, the beginning of another process. And every moment of a development is also at the same time the ending of one process and the beginning of another.

> Every phrase and every sentence is an end and a beginning
> Every poem an epitaph. And any action
> Is a step to the block, to the fire, down the sea's throat
> Or to an illegible stone: and that is where we start.
> We die with the dying:
> See, they depart, and we go with them.
> We are born with the dead:
> See, they return, and bring us with them.[1]

Every event, then, contains within itself a whole host of other events, balancing and overlapping in precarious play. Change is continuous not only horizontally, through time, but also vertically. History consists of histories, and everything is through and through temporal. As Whitehead, here very close to Dewey, would put it, every event is a society of events.

From this fact the truly Greek conclusion is drawn more pointedly by Dewey, the critic of classical culture, than by its admirer, Whitehead. Nature, says Dewey, is a vast *apeiron*, an indeterminate flux. Chance, accident, and fortune are irreducible features of reality. The chance is of that hardy variety by virtue of which every American lad may some day become President, and every American farmer may unpredictably be turned out by a mortgage foreclosure. It is the dangerously balanced instability of the stock-market, the freakishness of a volcanic eruption. It is not, however, the kind of chance which is incompatible with strictly determinate causality. In some sense of that variously used word, Dewey is a determinist. But Dewey would say with Aristotle that chance may depend upon necessity. The variations of the stock-market may be determined by

[1]T. S. Eliot, *Four Quartets* (New York, 1945), 38.

economic causes. And the action of John Jones may also be determined by a variety of causes. It is, none the less, sheer unhappy accident that John Jones should be determined to invest his life's savings just before the market is determined to break.

The reality of chance is based on something deeper, however, than the delicate balance of a juggler's nature. Chance is real because there is an ultimate novelty in nature. Nature is a garden whose season is always spring and whose every blossoming is a fresh creation. Every process issues in something unique. The immediate qualities, such as colours, sounds, pleasures, and pains are, Dewey says, "never exactly reduplicated, because the exact combination of events of which they are termini does not recur."[2] Not only are the sensory qualities unique, but also objects or events are aspects of *situations*, and "each situation [is] an *individual* situation, indivisible and unduplicable."[3] This shade of blue which I now look at, this tree at which I glance, both exist only for this moment and in another are gone, to be replaced by an entirely new colour and an entirely different tree. Each maintains a fragile perch upon a passing moment and then is lost, utterly and irreplaceably. Dewey can say with Heraclitus, "The sun is new each day."

In sum, Dewey opposes to the cosmology of nineteenth-century physics a nature which is multiple rather than one, whose constituents are events rather than things, whose processes are living histories rather than mathematical uniformities, whose moments are creative and unique rather than repetitions of eternal archetypes. The consequence is that we find ourselves in a new universe of deeper horizons, rich with possibilities, fraught with hazard, inviting adventure, and ruled by fortune. Dewey seems to have restored to us the fresh and wonderful world of Odysseus.

Of a nature so conceived, natural man is an integral part. Man is a microcosmic democracy. In his composition prudent reason, spirited passion, and mad dreaming have equal rights. His constitution is thoroughly historical and, like the natural histories of the physical universe, each personal history is an infinite maze of precariously interlocking subsidiary events. There is no separate organism, distinct from its environment. The individual can be known only through the multiplicity of interactions by which he exists. Yet this very multiplicity of interactions is the solvent in which our individuality is lost. "It is not exact nor relevant to say 'I experience' or 'I think.' 'It' experiences or is experienced, 'it' thinks or is thought, is a juster phrase. Experience, a serial course of affairs with their own characteristic properties and relationships, occurs, happens, and is what it is. Among and within these occurrences, not outside of them nor underlying them, are those events which are denominated selves."[4] Ex-

[2] *Experience and Nature* (Chicago, 1926), 115.
[3] *Logic: The Theory of Inquiry* (New York, 1938), 68; Dewey's italics.
[4] *Experience and Nature*, 232.

perience, then, is a universal river in which the play of currents occasionally produces those brief and giddy vortices called human beings.

To speak of the independent person maintaining his separate identity through time is to abstract from the dynamic flux of human society, and from the natural process of which society is a part. The physician and the psychiatrist cannot cure unless they understand the social and physical world in which their patients live. The educator and the minister of the gospel cannot succeed unless they take into account the world outside the gates. Yet, it is as much an abstract abbreviation to speak of Society as it is to speak of Nature or of the Individual. What is primary and real is the dynamic multiplicity of happenings.

Personal identity arises through some perturbation, some obstacle or problem which interrupts the even course of change. Man's individuality is maintained through the tension of opposing forces, and the resolution of this opposition is the death of man. The great historical rhythm of beginning, development, and ending is translated for man into the inception of conflict, the intensification of conflict, and the harmonious resolution of conflict in death. Man's life is a chronicle of struggle, and his existence depends upon the very dangers which threaten him. We can use a figure from Heraclitus, and compare our lives to the sweet music of the lyre, which sounds only when its strings quiver and strain. This is a Faustian picture of man, full of dissatisfaction and striving, restless and aspiring.

The same chance which permeates physical nature holds man in its power. The most obvious characteristics of human life are the surprises and upsets by which it is beset. Every man is still, to a very great extent, at the mercy of powers beyond his control and beyond his understanding. All human history is precariously balanced and unpredictably creative. Each human being can find hope in his indeterminate wealth of potentialities, and each can find despair in the Damoclean sword which threatens his every moment. The macrocosmic rhythm of beginning, development, and completion becomes in man sharper, more biting, more poignant. The Calvinism of Dewey's youth finds an opportunity here to come to the fore. Man does indeed eat his bread, but the sweat of his brow is not easily wiped away. The struggle is long, consummation rare. Heidegger, the great modern philosopher of *Existenz*, does not surpass Dewey in his awareness of the fact that man lives within the finite limits of time, overwhelmed by fear and trembling, bounded by death and the void.

In the middle twenties, the gilded days of the great American boom, Dewey wrote like a stern Hebrew prophet.

> Man finds himself living in an aleatory world; his existence involves, to put it baldly, a gamble. The world is a scene of risk; it is uncertain, unstable, uncannily unstable. Its dangers are irregular, inconstant, not to be counted upon as to their times and seasons. Although persistent, they are sporadic, episodic. It is darkest just before dawn; pride goes before a fall; the moment of greatest prosperity is the moment most charged with ill-omen, most opportune for the evil eye. Plague, famine, failure of crops, disease, death, defeat in battle, are always just around the corner, and so are abundance, strength, victory,

festival and song. Luck is proverbially both good and bad in its distributions. The sacred and the accursed are potentialities of the same situation. . . . Man fears because he exists in a fearful, an awful world. The *world* is precarious and perilous. It is as easily accessible and striking evidence of this fact that primitive experience is cited. The voice is that of early man; but the hand is that of nature, the nature in which we still live. It was not fear of gods that created the gods. . . . The visible is set in the invisible; and in the end what is unseen decides what happens in the seen; the tangible rests precariously upon the untouched and ungrasped. . . .[5]

This grim prospect is at once man's fate and man's hope. It is true that man's existence is only the passage from one problematic situation to another equally problematic. But that same chance which characterizes every novel event, and the plurality of relationships upon which it depends, invite man to alter and control the course of nature. Human freedom is possible only because nature, for all her awful grandeur, stands poised like a swift ship waiting to be launched, responsive to the smallest pressure. The indeterminacy of the world is a danger constantly threatening man's complacency, an opportunity constantly challenging man's intelligence, a spontaneity constantly pliant to man's control. We need neither submit passively to history nor become spectators indulging an Odysseus-like curiosity.

The crucial respect in which man stands above all the rest of nature is his power to control events. Man is able to use all nature for envisaged ends which he chooses freely and can alter at will. Without human intervention nature does indeed have endings. But it is one thing to say that a bush fire ends in a grey forest of stumps and quite another to say that the fire raged for the purpose of ending in ashes. The last straw may well break the camel's back without being added for that cruel purpose. Without human effort there is no conscious intent in nature. A man may die, a flower may bloom, an atom in the sun may explode, as a simple matter of fact, through blind natural process. But, on the other hand, the death may be the decision of the judge, the blossom may crown a long summer's patient care, and the atomic explosion may cap a series of experiments in a physics laboratory. Control, direction, use, work, and the occasional hard-won success—these, without man, would be lacking in nature. Through this fundamental character all human achievement must be measured.

Dewey's is a revolutionary venture—the reunion of theory and practice. Theoretical knowledge is a natural process. It is not the enjoyed spectacle of passing events, nor is it the accumulation of hard nuggets of fact, to be stored in memory's buried vaults. Knowledge is a process distinguished from other processes by the fact that it directs them toward goals which may be altered at will. It is not a world apart. To know something is to enter into its relationships, to affect its conditions, to direct its changes. The object of knowledge must in some measure become involved in the world of human action. There is a continuity between the arts and crafts, the experimental methods of science, and the purest work of mathematics

[5] *Ibid.*, 41-4; Dewey's italics.

and philosophy. All are either methods of shaping and altering natural processes or the study of methods for so doing. All so-called eternal truths are meaningful only in terms of concrete human actions. The same human actions which embody knowledge and truth are also the subjects of practical moral judgments. Our endeavours to resolve the difficulties in which we find ourselves are at once both moral and cognitive. Pure theory must consider as essential to its subject-matter the function of the investigator, regarded simply as a natural organism.

This means that the traditional interpretation of science must be altered. There are no abstract, universal, and necessary laws which, like the great god gravity, rule all the arbitrarily existent atoms in the universe. Our experience does not consist of discrete simple ideas succeeding one another with miraculous uniformity. All isolated elements, and all universal laws, are unreal abstractions. They are developed by man out of the vast creative continuum of nature to serve as instruments by which to resolve the problematic situations in which he is, by his constitution, perpetually embroiled. All hypotheses must be evaluated in terms of action. The model of true knowledge is not mathematics but history. All knowledge is existential, and refers to the immediate situation in which I find myself, here and now. It is essential that we take account of the future, but we can look at it only through the eyes of the present. All things, laws, elements, conditions, and factors, must be judged only by their efficiency in enabling us to control and redirect the contemporary world.

By the same token, this philosophy leads to a radical transvaluation of values. There are no final, eternal, or ultimate goods. If we were to accept his view, Dewey says, "men would think of themselves as agents, not as ends; ends would be found in experienced enjoyments of the fruits of a transforming activity."[6] Our enjoyments would change with the changes in our activities. All our goals are finite, tentative, and subject to change without notice. They are chosen as means for resolving some pressing immediate problem, and they are to be discarded once their relevance and usefulness are gone. Our purposes grow out of the present moment. In order to achieve and to harmonize our purposes, knowledge is essential. Our goals determine what knowledge we shall seek, and our knowledge in turn alters the situation out of which our goals arise. In this strange modern dialectic, the Platonic unity of the true and the good reappears.

In outlining this philosophy we have described a large circle. We began this paper with a sketch of Dewey's conception of nature. We see now, however, that his thought is not only about nature but also within it. He must say of his own, as of every other philosophy of nature, that it arises in answer to the special problems of its age. Its truth and value must be empirically determinable by the extent to which it enables contemporary men more effectively to eliminate the problems by which they are faced.

[6] *The Quest for Certainty* (New York, 1929), 276.

Knowledge is practical, however, because it does not merely find its problems lying ready at hand. Rather, it calls them forth as the spring sun calls forth the sleeping seeds within the earth. A philosophy is a creative act of imagination through which the past is given new life and energy, so that its growth may develop new and hitherto untried forms. Dewey first approaches the continuum of gross experience in order to create problems, to force into determinate form those vague but genuine difficulties by which we are blindly frustrated. Only within the context of a clearly defined problem can effective modes of action be formulated.

The central problem which Dewey's philosophy elaborates in a multitude of directions is the problem of human freedom. His philosophy of nature is, as it were, a scientist's laboratory, well stocked with the devices needed to lay bare the limitations and potentialities of human action. The question as to the reality and nature of human freedom is hardly a new one. What is new in Dewey is his setting of this age-old question within the context of the contemporary methods of the arts and the sciences. In particular, the context within which he usually works is that of the scientific understanding and direction of human affairs. To the extent that man has developed techniques which enable him to direct intelligently the processes of that all-inclusive nature of which he is an integral part, his freedom is real. Yet his tragic failures are as significant as his successes. If man is entirely within nature, and if nature is slowly mastering herself through man, the one cannot be understood without the other. How are we to render intelligible a nature within which intelligence, spontaneity, and freedom are immanent? What is the universal metaphysical community within which the brute compulsions of the physical world evolve toward the persuasive guidance of reason?

The manner in which mind may operate within the physical world has been portrayed with unsurpassed dramatic insight by Plato in the *Timaeus*. There he suggests that a divine and benevolent intelligence has fashioned the universe by modelling a tumultuous material upon the pattern of a rational order extraneous to it. Most philosophers have remained within the Platonic tradition in taking rational truth to be universal, necessary, and unchanging, entirely independent of the temporal flux. According to the great hypothesis of the *Timaeus*, reason can control nature only by seizing upon those permanent patterns and mathematical uniformities which underlie the arbitrary succession of sensory appearances.

Dewey, however, turns away sharply from any such suggestion of transcendentalism. Both the universal laws and the reason which seeks to grasp them are within nature, and are involved in that same process of development which is inherent in all reality. In the phenomena of the mind as well as in those of physics there is an interplay of fixed forms and fluent evolution. Intelligence is a conversation between man and the world around him. By its means the insistent arguments of the present place and the present moment are set into clearer perspective, and what is distant

in space and time is brought into more effective interaction with human power. It is a conversation in which each party really listens to what the other is saying, instead of sitting deaf-eared, waiting for a pause which he can seize. The persuasion is mutual, and nothing remains fixed except the structure of syntax along which the moving words weave their bonds. No paradox, therefore, is involved in the view that nature directs herself through human action.

Nevertheless, it is not for slight reasons that philosophers have traditionally distinguished between being and becoming, logical form and historical process, the continuous and the discrete. If the changing processes of nature, both human and non-human, move along the fixed grooves of formal structure, we may rightfully ask Dewey for an analysis of how this relation between law and change is possible. That is, we may ask for a critical metaphysics which will analyse and expound how the continuous and permanent factors in nature are compatible with the isolated and unique. Dewey himself summarizes one aspect of the difficulty.

> The occurrence of problematic and unsettled situations is due to the characteristic union of the discrete or individual and the continuous or relational. . . . All experienced objects have a double status. They are individualized, consummatory, whether in the way of enjoyment or of suffering. They are also involved in a continuity of interaction and changes. . . . There is an incompatibility between the traits of an object in its direct individual and unique nature and those traits that belong to it in its relations or continuities.[7]

Dewey's tendency, clearly, is to take as primary the total integrated and flowing situation. His emphasis upon becoming, growth, and development is such that individual identity resides in the focus of contending forces, forces which are themselves only passing phases within a moving situation devoid of discrete elements. There is no room here for freedom, individuality, responsibility, and control. Nevertheless, Dewey recognizes that without unique and unrepeatable moments change is only a disorderly chaos. Without enduring entities complex interaction within a situation is impossible. Without continuing personal identity intelligent inquiry is meaningless. Only someone with a Heraclitean love of paradox would contend that both permanence and change, the recurrent and the unique, the continuous and the discrete, are not actually experienced together. The problem is, then, how the compatibility of these ancient antinomies is to be understood and analysed.

Dewey's answer is to take contemporary scientific method as the archetype of true knowledge, and to generalize from it a logic of inquiry. He singles out the procedure of science because in it the conversation between man and the moving mass of nature has become most clear and persuasive. The brute forces of the universe no longer act upon man with the blind and perilous chance of the past, but are led through the sensitive channels of probing instruments of observation. Through science man gradually learns

[7] *Ibid.*, 235-7.

to guide the gigantic forces of the universe in their mighty play. The difficulty with such an answer is, however, that the method of science is itself only another one, albeit a very important one, of the multifarious processes of which nature is constituted. Scientific activity moves within the universal classes which metaphysics studies. The understanding of scientific method, like the understanding of any other natural process, presupposes the relations among the metaphysical categories. How, then, are being and becoming, continuity and discreteness, and the other categories of metaphysics interrelated, whether it be in the courses of the planets, the life of the amoeba, the soul of man, or the method of science?

Scattered through Dewey's works there are suggestive but fragmentary metaphysical analyses. For the most part, however, he avoids those fundamental and wide-ranging questions which it has been the traditional function of metaphysics to raise. The problem of human freedom which underlies the contemporary conflict of tradition and revolution, free enterprise and a planned economy, national sovereignty and world organization, is left unresolved. To be sure, there is no shame in failing where so many great predecessors have failed before. Whether his ideas are as creative and fertile for his time as those of some of his predecessors were for theirs, however, only the future can decide. Meanwhile, the time-honoured antitheses of theory and practice, art and nature, freedom and necessity, organism and environment, continue unreconciled. They remain two endless rows of opposing sphinxes, crouched as if about to spring, claws ready to tear one another to bits, and yet smiling, because each one knows that he is quite safe—his enemy is only stone.

# SHAKESPEARE AND WILLIAM POEL

ARTHUR COLBY SPRAGUE

ON May 2, 1881, *Othello* was magnificently revived in London. Irving had invited Edwin Booth, who was playing with a weak company elsewhere, to visit him at the Lyceum, and the two great actors alternated in the parts of Iago and the Moor, with Ellen Terry as Desdemona. One hears of the "tumultuous applause" which they received, of the hard-shoving throng at the pit door, the many artists and authors who were present, the factions of "Boothites," "Irvingites," and "Terryites." It was a production which could be cited with pride as evidence "that this nineteenth century of ours . . . is not wholly unworthy to enjoy the heritage of Shakespeare."[1]

By comparison, the single matinée of *Hamlet* at St. George's Hall, the month before, had attracted little attention. It had been given, indeed, by amateurs and quite without scenery. On February 12, the *Academy* noted that "the issue of the cheap facsimiles of the Shakspere quartos by Mr. Griggs and Mr. Furnivall has already led to one unexpected good result . . . a member of the New Shakspere Society, Dr. W. Pole, and some amateur students and critics have resolved on giving, what Shakspere students and critics have long desired to see"—a representation of the First Quarto edition of *Hamlet*, "preserving its order of scenes, following its stage directions and omissions, and correcting only the manifest blunders of its text." A mis-statement in this notice was swiftly corrected. Dr. Pole, F.R.S., "engineer, musician, and authority on whist," disclaimed any connection with the venture. It was his son, William Poel, to use his stage name, for the young man was an actor, who was responsible. Furnivall of the New Shakspere Society was likewise interested, since there were theories about this most unorthodox Quarto which could be tested by seeing it played.

The *Academy* had another cordial notice on April 9. The performance is to be "next Saturday afternoon, April 16"; Elizabethan costumes are to be worn; instead of elaborate scenery there will only be "perhaps a little tapestry. . . . This all sounds as if it were going to be distinctly interesting." A scholarly review followed on April 23. Nothing, indeed, is said of the staging, but the First Quarto proved to be a complete and actable play.

The performance itself was certainly up to the average of amateur performances of a high class. The only failure was the Ghost. . . . Hamlet was personated by Mr. W. Poel, who took on himself the burden of getting up the play, training the minor actors, and superintending every detail. He looked the pale and thoughtful student to the life, and in some passages moved his audience to warm applause; but his voice and he were hardly up to the requirements of his part—who, indeed, is?—and his emphasis was sometimes faulty.

[1]Mowbray Morris, *Essays in Theatrical Criticism* (London, 1882), 95.

Writing many years later, Poel claimed for the production that it was "the first revival of the draped stage . . . in this country or elsewhere."[2] There was no vestige of scenery, nor even locality boards; only a raised platform, on which, for instance, the dumb show was presented.[3] With no intermission—another instance of daring—the performance lasted only two hours. A boy appeared as the Player Queen. As "Ofelia," Maud Holt (who later became Lady Tree) carried a lute instead of the customary flowers in the Mad Scene.[4]

The conservatives were up in arms at once. The *reductio ad absurdum*, an argument which was often to be used against Poel in the years to come, was attempted in the *Saturday Review*. Why not go further still and present the play by daylight or candlelight? Ophelia and Gertrude should be acted by boys. The costumes, to be consistent, ought certainly to have been modern, not Elizabethan: "Hamlet should have superintended the play in evening dress and killed Laertes in a fencing jacket." Furnivall in an address at the beginning had asked the audience's indulgence—and it was liberally bestowed. "The audience not only tolerated a version of *Hamlet* which botchers and pirates had done their best to reduce to a *caput mortuum*, but, with the exception of an occasional titter, they listened with a gravity of dubious merit while that degraded text was declaimed in a manner beneath criticism. Only once was there a general laugh." Poel himself is allowed credit for having "perfectly solved the problem of giving *Hamlet* without the Prince of Denmark"; the company as a whole displayed "the airy confidence of ineptitude." "It is high time," the writer concludes, "that people who set up an idol and dub it Shakspere should be made to understand that the antics they may be pleased to indulge in before it are not to be taken seriously." Another reviewer, Dutton Cook, is chiefly concerned with the perversities of the Quarto text, which "certain sages or wiseacres" have chosen to venerate. The production was "necessarily of a very incomplete kind," and "the attitude of the general audience was one of apathy tinctured by a disposition to deride." Some stir attended the appearance of Fortinbras, "a character usually omitted from ordinary acting editions of the tragedy. But to many the performance was very wearisome and depressing; while a strong feeling prevailed that, upon the whole, the experiment was of an absurd and reprehensible sort, involving, as it did necessarily, some degradation of the poet in whose honour it purported to be undertaken."[5]

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[2] *Monthly Letters* (London, 1929), 83. Poel overlooks or disregards Webster's quasi-Elizabethan production of *The Taming of the Shrew* at the Haymarket in 1844.

[3] Joseph Knight, in *Theatre*, May, 1881.

[4] See Poel, *Monthly Letters*, 83, and *Shakespeare in the Theatre* (London and Toronto, 1913), 171, 172; and cf. Granville-Barker, *Prefaces to Shakespeare*, Third Series (London, 1937), 137.

[5] *Nights at the Play* (London, 1883), II, 314-16.

William Poel was born on July 22, 1852. When he was about twenty he saw his first play, *The Merchant of Venice*, with Ryder as Shylock. Afterwards, he read it and was struck by the difference between what he had just seen and what he read. He was dissatisfied with his work in a contractor's office and decided to adopt the stage as a career. Chiefly he wanted to study Shakespeare.[6] He had been an actor for about five years when his *Hamlet* was given at St. George's Hall.

In 1887 he founded the Shakespeare Reading Society. Years later, Mr. Bernard Shaw affords us a glimpse of this group "seated like Christy minstrels" on a platform. They gave, too, a regularly staged performance of *Macbeth*, and he was deeply interested in their Lady Macbeth, a very young and quite inexperienced Lillah McCarthy.[7] Meanwhile, Poel had produced *The Duchess of Malfi* for Grein's "Independent Theatre," on October 21, 1892, and *Measure for Measure* at the Royalty a year later. Webster's tragedy came as a relief, to many, after the society's disturbing experiments with Ibsen. It was tactfully adapted for the Victorian stage, handsomely mounted, and in most respects quite uncharacteristic of Poel.[8] With *Measure for Measure* he returned to his Elizabethan methods, and controversy began anew.

A small proscenium had been built, with a platform or gallery in the background. Changes of scene were marked by the drawing of transverse curtains. On the sides of the stage, and in the theatre's dismantled side-boxes, sat gentlemen in Elizabethan costume who, during the one ten-minute interval, regaled themselves with Elizabethan clay pipes.[9] Wonder was expressed, sarcastically of course, how that "most vital element of dramatic representation" in Shakespeare's time, boys in the women's parts, could have been forgotten. As it was, instead of good acting there was "an intelligent, but monotonous and lifeless, recitation of the parts."[10]

A subtle and dangerous enemy now appears in William Archer. As yet, it is true, he somewhat withholds his fire. Certain details in the staging were wrong: the curtain was much too far forward; the doors shown in De Witt's newly discovered drawing were wanting; *Measure for Measure* has no directions calling for entrances "above," though such entrances were arbitrarily introduced in this production. Then there was the choice of the

[6]Interview in the *Observer*, Oct. 20, 1929. One of his earliest engagements was as "utility man" in a Dublin theatre. He mentions, also, touring with Osmond Tearle's company. In 1883-4 he was stage manager with the Benson company.

[7]Shaw, *Our Theatres in the Nineties* (New York, 1931), I, 136, 137; see also Lillah McCarthy, *Myself and My Friends* (New York, 1933), 28 ff. The performance was in May, 1895.

[8]This has not always been recognized; but see, e.g., Wedmore in the *Academy*, Clement Scott in the *Illustrated London News*, the *Athenaeum* (Oct. 29, 1892), and the *Theatre* (Nov. 1).

[9]For Poel's stage, see especially *The Times*, Nov. 11, 1893, and William Archer, *The Theatrical "World" for 1893*, 266 ff.

[10]*Saturday Review*, Nov. 18, 1893.

play. "There is no other play of Shakespeare's in which so much of the dialogue is absolutely unspeakable before a modern audience." Hence large excisions were necessary. "Several of the performers simply improvised at will when their memory failed them."[11]

For a friendly account one turns to the *Academy*, which had once been kind to Poel's *Hamlet*:

> While we are far from urging the abandonment at the ordinary theatre of so much that draws the general public to a Shaksperian play—the elaborate and beautiful scenery to which audiences have become accustomed—we must chronicle the fact that the extremely intelligent audiences gathered to see "Measure for Measure" scarcely seem to have missed the absence of scenery, so closely, with the prompt and rapid action now inculcated, has it been possible to follow the story of the play. If the dialogue sometimes seemed to be spoken too hurriedly, that was, probably, because the amateurs, with all their good intentions, had not learnt completely how to be both swift and intelligible. . . . They have presented the play with dignity, and enacted it with a quaint charm.[12]

That the performers sometimes spoke too rapidly even for this sympathetic reviewer is interesting. Poel had his own ideas about the reading of verse. Elizabethan actors had been praised, he shows, for the nimbleness of their speech, and a return to their ways is imperative. The heavy stressing of a more recent time—Mrs. Siddons's "Give ME the daggers"—could scarcely have been used at the Globe. (Edwin Forrest took six full minutes to get through "To be, or not to be"—and was praised for his deliberation![13]) Rather, all "redundancy of emphasis" is to be avoided, and "the audience should never be made to feel that the tones are unusual."[14] Yet Shakespeare, Poel believed, counted upon contrasts in the voices of his speakers, just as he was ever "conscious of the need for variety in sound and in time as means to sustain dramatic interest. In fact, the atmosphere, so to speak, of Elizabethan drama is created through the voice, that of modern drama through the sight."[15]

Many of Poel's arguments in advocating a return to the Elizabethan stage are almost commonplaces today. The bareness of that stage was a challenge to the imagination of dramatist and spectator alike. And, indeed, it is not readily conceivable that Shakespeare would enjoy having his poetical descriptions superseded by the obtrusive art of the scene-painter. In his theatre, a poet could use his gifts, could count, too, upon an audience undistracted by "outward decorations and subordinate details."[16] The

[11] *The Theatrical "World" for 1893*, 266 ff. Whether performances of *Measure for Measure* should be sanctioned is questioned in perfect seriousness by William Winter, *The Wallet of Time* (New York, 1913), I, 389.

[12] Nov. 18, 1893. For a somewhat different and depressing account of the audience on the first night (Nov. 9), see *Theatre*, Jan. 1, 1894.

[13] Alfred Ayres, *Actors and Actors, Elocution and Elocutionists* (New York, 1894), 101. No other actor Ayres had heard took more than four minutes, and some less than three.

[14] Poel, *Shakespeare in the Theatre*, 57, 58.

[15] *Monthly Letters*, 92, 93. For Poel's "interpretation of character in terms of vocal music," cf. interviews with Robert Speaight in the *Stage*, March 14, 1946, and Sir Lewis Casson in *The Shakespeare Pictorial Occasional Papers*, Nov.-Dec., 1945.

[16] *Shakespeare in the Theatre*, 8.

same lack of scenery concentrated attention on the player, "with whose movement, boldly defined against a simple background, nothing interfered." His action, "placed close before the eye, deprived of all perspective . . . acquired a special kind of realism"—that "of an actual event, at which the audience assisted."[17] Finally, the construction of Shakespeare's plays, freely flowing, unconfined by act divisions, is incomprehensible without reference to the stage for which he wrote. Instead, therefore, of adapting him we should endeavour to bring "our own minds within reach of those influences from which the Elizabethan playgoer undoubtedly obtained the greatest enjoyment," honouring the poet by carrying out his intentions.[18]

So the Elizabethan Stage Society was established, including among its members Sidney Lee, Stopford Brooke, Israel Gollancz, Edmund Gosse, and Walter Crane. In June, 1895, they did *Twelfth Night*, following this, in December, with *The Comedy of Errors* in Gray's Inn Hall where it had been presented three centuries before. Among the more exciting of the society's later productions were: Marlowe's *Faustus*, given with a prologue by Swinburne on July 2, 1896 (*The Times* found the play "scarcely fitted for representation on the modern stage, where its free introduction of sacred characters jars a little upon one's sense of propriety"); *The Merchant of Venice*, with the Prince of Arragon episode restored and Shylock played as a comic character, late in 1898; *Richard II*, with Granville-Barker as the King, in November, 1899; and *Everyman*, Poel's greatest triumph, in July, 1901. Later still, in 1912, he produced a memorable *Troilus and Cressida* with Edith Evans as Cressida.

The work of the society was brilliantly defended by Mr. Bernard Shaw. It was uncomfortable, of course, to have him as an ally. At one time he was railing at the Elizabethan dramatists (the "blank-verse beast" Marlowe and the rest), at another scolding Shakespeare himself and ridiculing those who revered him—for the wrong things. Yet, not from principle but from actual observation, Shaw was convinced that it was thus, on the platform stage, that Shakespeare should be given. There the actor, placed as he was in the midst of his hearers, enjoyed an immense advantage; and the play, as it could never be "as a picture framed by a proscenium," was brought home to the audience. "We are less conscious of the artificiality of the stage when a few well-understood conventions, adroitly handled, are substituted for attempts at an impossible scenic verisimilitude."[19] In the first scene of *The Tempest*, where a stage ship would be merely monstrous, we are willing to pretend that a gallery is one. Stimulated by Shakespeare's poetry, the imagination can accomplish wonders. And it is the more poetic of his plays—*A Midsummer Night's Dream* and *The Tempest* rather than

[17] "Shakespeare's Stage and Plays" (*Bulletin of the John Rylands Library*, April-Sept., 1916).

[18] "Shakespeare on the Stage in the Elizabethan Manner" (*The Times*, June 2, 1905).

[19] *Our Theatres in the Nineties*, II, 194. Cf. I, 198-200.

*Othello*—which do best without scenery.[20] "The only Shakespearian performances by which he had been really moved," Shaw once said, were "those of the Elizabethan Stage Society."[21]

William Archer was simply irritated. Once and once only, writing of the society's *Twelfth Night*, he attacks without caution. Restoration of the Elizabethan stage will be a most imperfect restoration without Elizabethan actors and, above all, an Elizabethan audience. Shakespeare will not be made to live for the modern playgoer "by a form of representation which appeals only to the dilettante and the enthusiast." This was not to defend contemporary practice. Shakespeare, Archer admitted, was grossly maltreated, "the reasonable integrity and consecutiveness of his text" destroyed to accommodate the scene-painter and the stage carpenter. But to argue from the abuse of a thing to its disuse is fallacious. "Because scenery is stupidly overdone . . . we are forcibly to put back the clock, and, instead of refining a living art, make hopeless efforts to revive a dead one!" There is no necessary reason why the text should be sacrificed in the modern theatre; nowadays it seems "as easy to change a scene as to draw a 'traverse.' " And to the question, "Do appropriate scenery and costume help and stimulate the imagination of a theatrical audience?" he answers: "Emphatically, yes; and, on the other hand, glaring anachronism of costume, and the absence of any sort of pictorial background, tend to disconcert and hamper the imagination, and to distract attention from the matter of the play."[22]

After this, it is difficult to take seriously the professions of friendship toward the enterprise which Archer continually makes. His later criticism is, however, concerned increasingly with details of execution rather than with ideals. He discovers a streak of perversity (or is it merely a want of common sense?) in Poel's staging:

> When one thinks of the toil that must be involved in organizing and preparing these frequent performances—in negotiating with civic and legal magnates for the use of their Halls, in animating the ambition, soothing the vanities, reconciling the jealousies, overcoming the laziness of a large company of amateur and unpaid actors, in arranging for the dresses and the music, and, finally, in so rehearsing long plays that, despite the performers' inexperience, they go (as a rule) with perfect smoothness—when one thinks of all this, one feels it base ingratitude to say a word in disparagement of the results achieved. . . . There is not another man in London who could do what he does—and there is scarcely another man who, from the artistic point of view, could make such a hopeless mess of it. . . . He seems to study the Elizabethan stage in order to do precisely the reverse of what reasonable conjecture, if not actual stage-direction, assures us that the Elizabethans did.[23]

There were, too, the large deletions in some of Poel's acting texts—and

[20] See especially Shaw's review of Poel's production of *The Tempest*, *ibid.*, III, 253 ff.

[21] "Shakespeare on the Modern Stage" (*The Times*, Oct. 25, 1905); an account of a public discussion at the Guildhall School of Music. Shaw, Poel, Bourchier, Furnivall, and Grein were among those who spoke.

[22] *The Theatrical "World" for 1895*, 221 ff.

[23] *Study and Stage* (London, 1899), 231, 232.

"the Society's whole reason for existence vanishes when it begins to flourish the blue pencil."[24]

Although Archer points out a few mistakes in Tree's *Julius Caesar* of 1898—a production as different from those of the Elizabethan Stage Society as could well be imagined—he is on the whole enthusiastic, finding the play "superbly staged."[25] Another writer, St. John Hankin, is not enthusiastic at all, and his criticism suggests that he knew and liked the work of Poel. At any rate, Tree, in replying to Hankin, alludes to "learned amateur societies who will present Shakespeare in such a way as to commend him to the few, while boring the many." Rather, it is "the business of the manager to present Shakespeare in such a way as to commend him to the many, even at the risk of agitating the few."[26]

In more formal pronouncements of a later time, Tree would have illusion the great end of theatrical art. "All that aids illusion is good, all that destroys illusion is bad." Shakespeare himself, he argues, was dissatisfied with the stage of his own day, and "not only foresaw, but desired, the system of production that is now most in the public favour." Did he not write the choruses in *Henry V*, the satirical play scene at the end of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*?[27] For answer, if any answer is needed, there is a letter full of good sense which Shaw contributed to the book by the scene-painter Joseph Harker, *Studio and Stage*, in 1924: "Every play should be performed as its author intended it to be performed. It is no reply to this that Shakespear would have written for scenery if he could. It might as well be said that he would have written for the cinema if he could. The fact remains that he did not, and that the stage for which he wrote his plays is the only one to which they are adapted, and on which they make the effects he planned."[28]

As one thinks of Poel's work, still further names come to mind. There was Sir Max Beerbohm, who had no use for it. *Twelfth Night*, as given by the E.S.S. in 1903, greatly depressed him: "You are allowed to shed a tear or two when you see the owls building their nests in some palace that was erst a setting of gaiety and pride and riches." When Shakespeare wrote, "the science of scenic production was in its infancy." An Elizabethan audience might accept defects and limitations which are impossible for us

[24] *The Theatrical "World" for 1895*, 224.

[25] *Study and Stage*, 77.

[26] *Academy*, Feb. 5 and 26, 1898.

[27] *Thoughts and After-Thoughts* (New York and London, 1913), 57 ff. Oscar Wilde had written to much the same effect in his essay "Shakespeare on Scenery" (*Dramatic Review*, March 14, 1885); cf. Austin Brereton, *Life of Henry Irving* (London, 1908), I, 354 and Arthur Bourchier, *Some Reflections on the Drama—and Shakespeare* (Oxford, 1911), 40, 41. It should be added that when Poel's disciple Sir Philip Ben Greet gave "Elizabethan" productions in America he met with much the same hostility as had been shown his master. See, e.g., the *New York Sun*, March 24, 1907.

[28] P. 188. "The principle," as Shaw goes on to explain, "must be applied with constant regard to common sense and knowledge of essential points."

to tolerate. "We cannot forget what we have learned."[29] Poel, again, made his Chorus in *Samson Agonistes* come down through the audience to reach the stage. Familiar as such an entrance would be today, it was then strange, and to Beerbohm ridiculous. "Aesthetically, of course, there could be no reason for it, since it must obviously destroy all aesthetic illusion, and send us all into paroxyms of internal laughter."[30]

On the other hand, no critic has left a more sensitive appreciation of Poel's art than C. E. Montague.[31] To be at *Samson Agonistes* as Poel gave it was, he found, to be possessed of a new pleasure. "One seemed to be in at the birth of a thing that some day might be valued for ancientry." The groupings of the characters were a joy in themselves—it was as if Poel "had had every one of his groupings painted to a finish in his mind and then transferred it, touch by touch, to its place on the purple background, all under the strong influence of Italian mediaeval and Renaissance theories of pictorial design." In *Everyman*, "the acting had a maintained ecstasy of simple seriousness, every actor seemed to have the same grave, thrilled sense of the momentousness of what they were all handling. . . . They spoke like people who felt they were bringing tremendous news." In *Faustus*, there was the same sincerity and a never failing tact. "The least slip in judgment was sure to raise laughter, and nobody laughed."

Montague recognizes limitations as well. Poel could not rid himself of the proscenium arch. "What he gave us was not an Elizabethan stage as it was known to Elizabethan playgoers, but a picture of an Elizabethan stage seen through the frame of a modern proscenium." Wanting was that "fusion or interpenetration of stage and auditorium" which was "the essence of the Elizabethan theatre." Yet a great deal was accomplished. "We saw better than ever the needlessness, as well as the destructiveness, of the quite modern method of taking Shakspere's shortest scenes. They are usually scurried through by actors who maintain a precarious footing on a strip of boarding between the footlights in front and a bellying sail painted with landscape, which swells out at them from behind." On Poel's stage, one scene flowed into another "without the slightest jolt or scrappiness." The upper stage proved to be a fine asset. "As for scenery, one did not think about it, either in the way of missing it, or of being glad it was away. But if any people did imperatively need to be distracted from the play, they could look at the dresses, which were quaint and rich to admiration."[32]

Today, more than twelve years after Poel's death, his influence might appear to be slight. Shakespeare,whether produced by Margaret Webster

[29] *Around Theatres* (London, 1924), I, 452 ff. Cf. I, 112.

[30] *Ibid.*, II, 407. The performance was in December, 1908. Poel had used such entrances earlier (cf. *Athenaeum*, Dec. 14, 1895; Nov. 18, 1899), when exigencies of space necessitated them.

[31] "The Art of Mr. Poel" (*c.* 1908); in *Dramatic Values* (New York, 1925), pp. 222-43.

[32] Shaw calls attention to Poel's achievements in costuming, and he repeatedly praises his use of Elizabethan music (see, especially, *Our Theatres in the Nineties*, III, 381).

or the Old Vic Company, is still being given with substantial scenery. Nor, in America at any rate, have we been having many productions of his plays which preferred suggestion to simple representation. The imaginative methods introduced by Granville-Barker and others a generation ago—methods which were really an extension of Poel's—have in their turn provoked reaction.

"I started the Elizabethan Stage Society," Poel once said, "in order to go straight to the Shakespearean text."[33] The plays, in shockingly mangled versions, were being exploited as mere vehicles or shows. He demonstrated that under sympathetic direction they need be neither; that they are far more interesting—more actable even—if their integrity is respected. Continuity of performance, at least, is taken for granted when they are given today. We no longer waste a great part of the evening—in Tree's productions it might be three-quarters of an hour[34]—gazing at an unresponsive curtain while the scenes are being shifted. And it is noteworthy that our present practically unbroken sequences were achieved well before the cinema had begun to influence the stage.

Poel, writes Mr. Harcourt Williams, "never abandoned his original conception of Shakespeare as a consummate craftsman of the practical theatre."[35] We are no longer startled by the conception, but it was startling enough when Poel first defended it. Shakespeare in the study was almost everything else. On the stage, it is true, he had lent dignity to the art of the great actors, but he was not trusted. It was Poel's revolutionary discovery that he could be trusted. As with the criticism of great plays, so with their representation: a sensitive regard for the author's intention is ever to be preferred to mere impressionism or virtuosity.

[33]Interview in the *Observer*, Oct. 20, 1929.
[34]Gordon Crosse, *Fifty Years of Shakespearean Playgoing* (London, 1941), 44.
[35]Harold Downs, ed., *Theatre and Stage* (London, 1934), 541, 542.

# THE NOVELS OF GEORGE BERNARD SHAW

CLAUDE T. BISSELL

IN the London of the late seventies, it was inevitable that a young man, determined upon a serious literary career, should try his hand at the writing of novels. For this was an age when the novelist could aim at distinction and, at the same time, reasonably hope for popularity: nobody, it is true, had yet taken the place of Thackeray and Dickens, but George Eliot and Anthony Trollope were still alive, and George Meredith was just entering upon the era of his greatest popular success. In 1879, George Bernard Shaw was a young Irish immigrant of twenty-three, who since his arrival in London three years before had been frequenting artistic and literary circles, and who accordingly felt that his talents and his rich experience of life could find a triumphant issue in the writing of novels. Until 1883 he devoted himself almost entirely to the realization of this purpose. The results were, at least, a tribute to his pertinacity and industry; undeterred by a monotonous succession of refusals from unenlightened publishers, he continued "to fill five pages . . . a day, rain or shine, dull or inspired,"[1] and in five years turned out five novels. Today the novels have taken their place in the Standard Edition, not merely as the *juvenilia* of a great artist, but as works that have considerable merit in their own right. I do not propose, however, to follow those critics who have sought to add another reputation to the many that Shaw has already acquired and have thrust him, belatedly, into the ranks of the great English novelists.[2] It is my purpose rather to show how invaluable these early works are for the understanding of Shaw's intellectual and artistic development.

Shaw's first novel, written in 1879, was called with "merciless fitness,"[3] *Immaturity*, and was, among other things, a conscientious attempt to fulfil Victorian requirements of length and solidity; it is divided into four long books, and it is conceivable that the young author envisaged its inclusion in Mr. Mudie's Select Lending Library of three-volume novels. In *Immaturity* Shaw made his first and only attempt in a novel to come to grips with lower middle class life; the opening book is called "Islington," and the characters are clerks, housekeepers, shopkeepers, and servants, who are driven by the monotonous routine of existence to find emotional release in

[1]Preface to *Immaturity*, 37. Quotations from Shaw's works throughout this article are from the Standard Edition (London, 1931-2).

[2]Archibald Henderson gives quotations from a number of the more enthusiastic critical comments on the novels. James Huneker maintained that "Shaw could rank higher as a novelist than as a dramatist—always selecting for judgment the supreme pages of his tales, pages wherein character, wit, humour, pathos, fantasy, and observation mingled with an overwhelming effect." Christopher Morley thus concludes a tribute to Shaw, the novelist: "I myself regard him as a great novelist gone wrong." See Henderson, *Bernard Shaw, Playboy and Prophet* (New York, 1932), 112-3; henceforth referred to as Henderson.

[3]Preface to *Cashel Byron's Profession*, 9.

evangelical religion. But as the novel progresses, these characters receive less and less treatment. We enter a world of wealthy dilettantes, artists, and thinkers. The scene is now set in Kensington, usually in *salons* attended only by those who approve of "felt hats, tweed and velveteen clothes, long hair, music on Sundays, pictures of the nude figure, literary women, and avowals of agnosticism."[4] Along with the change of scene and *dramatis personae* goes a change in literary method. The opening chapters might come from a novel by Gissing; they are written in a tone of sober, detailed realism. But the rest of the novel, with the exception of an incongruous attempt at Dickensian melodrama, strives to maintain a tone of sophisticated social satire.

In spite of publishers' complaints that the novel was innocent of plot, it is obvious that Shaw was doing his best to satisfy the popular demand for intrigue and suspense by introducing a number of complicated romantic entanglements. His real interest, however, was not in plot, not even in social satire, but in what we might call spiritual autobiography. The hero, Robert Smith, is obviously a younger version of the author: "a youth of eighteen, with closely cropped pale yellow hair, small grey eyes, and a slender lathy figure. His delicately cut features and nervous manner indicated some refinement; but his shyness, though fairly well covered up, showed that his experience of society was limited, and his disposition sensitive."[5] It is the study of Robert Smith, who represents Bernard Shaw's "immaturity"—intellect and imagination virtually untouched by emotional insight and experience—that almost gives the novel a leading theme and supplies the chief source of interest for the modern reader.

Until its publication in book form in 1921, *Immaturity* had a reading public consisting exclusively of publishers' critics. Most of them, like George Meredith, reader for Chapman and Hall, merely dismissed the novel without any critical comment. But at least one, in all likelihood John Morley of Macmillan's, found *Immaturity* worthy of a serious appraisal and softened his ultimate refusal with some judicious praise.[6]

In his second novel, *The Irrational Knot*, written in 1880, Shaw made an attempt to remedy the discursiveness and formlessness of *Immaturity*. First of all, he carefully restricts his caste of characters: landladies, clerks, and shopkeeping evangelicals have disappeared; we are throughout, with a few minor exceptions, in a world of wealth and social refinement. True, the hero, Edward Conolly, calls himself a "workman," but he is a workman who speedily amasses a large fortune and a favoured position in society by reason of his enterprise and ingenuity. In the second place, the novel has a carefully worked out structural pattern that springs from the resolution of a conflict between characters who embody two strongly opposed attitudes toward life. On the one side is Conolly, the workman-financier,

[4] *Immaturity*, 105. [5] *Immaturity*, 4.

[6] See Charles Morgan, *The House of Macmillan, 1843-1943* (London, 1943). In this book Morgan prints generous extracts from the Macmillan reports on all the novels.

the apostle of reason, who has forged his ideas of morality and culture on the hard anvil of experience; on the other side is the wealthy and attractive Marian Lind, a creature of instinct and emotion, who accepts the conventions of her social caste. At first, however, neither recognizes that such a cleavage exists between them. Indeed, Marian Lind sentimentally convinces herself that Conolly, with his superior mind and cool self-possession, would make an admirable husband; and Conolly reasons scientifically that Marian Lind, with her wealth, her beauty, and her refinement, would make a desirable wife. The resulting marriage is a dismal failure. Conolly comes to despise his wife for her shallow conventionalism; and Marian finds her husband's condescending assumption of intellectual superiority insufferable. In despair, she elopes with an aristocratic lover, a model of gentlemanly refinement, only to discover that she can no longer tolerate the fatuities of her own class. At the end of the novel Shaw brings the hero and heroine together again. Although they realize that a reconciliation is impossible, they have acquired wisdom from their bitter experiences: Conolly now sees that the dictates of the mind are often cruel and Marian that the promptings of the heart are often foolish.

Rereading *The Irrational Knot* twenty-five years after he had written it, Shaw discovered that "this jejune exploit of mine" was a work of the "first order," in the sense that its morality was original and not second-hand. When *A Doll's House* reached England in translation several years later, Shaw was unimpressed, for had he not already "made a morally original study of marriage, and made it, too, without any melodramatic forgeries, spinal diseases, and suicides. . . ."?[7] It is doubtful whether an anticipation of the "moral originality" of *A Doll's House* establishes a compelling reason for even an academic reconsideration of *The Irrational Knot*. And certainly the publishers, all of whom turned it down, may be forgiven for failing to recognize the genius of the young novelist underneath the stilted dialogue and the unconvincing characterization. But the modern reader will be unable, nevertheless, to accept the Victorian judgment of *The Irrational Knot*; for even in this immature novel he will recognize the first confident signs of those qualities that were to be developed so triumphantly when Shaw turned to the stage—a skill in maintaining a delicate balance between opposing points of view and an intellectual clarity that forbids a sentimental or melodramatic resolution of a dramatic conflict.

Shaw's third novel, *Love among the Artists*, promptly submitted to the publishers a year after he had finished writing *The Irrational Knot*, was, for the most part, a solemnly didactic essay on the nature of art. The characters are all sketchy embodiments of various attitudes toward art, and to each is carefully apportioned an exact measure of approval or dis-

[7]Preface to *The Irrational Knot*, 18-19.

approval. The highest embodiment of artistic excellence is the great natural genius, in Shaw's novel a sort of cardboard imitation of Beethoven, who answers to no tribunal except his own vision of truth and beauty. From this height we descend through various levels until, at the lowest, we reach the self-conscious academic, for whom art springs, not from an inner necessity, but from a theory of the good and the beautiful.

*Love among the Artists* is, assuredly, the worst of the five novels and one of the few genuinely dull books that Shaw ever wrote. Fortunately, however, in this novel he exhausted his vein of callow didacticism. *Cashel Byron's Profession*, opus number 4, is a complete contrast in every way to its immediate predecessor.

*Cashel Byron's Profession* is a comic romance, enlivened by the play of ideas—a variant on the story of how the handsome young beggar lad wins the hand of the rich and beautiful princess. In Shaw's modernized version, the beggar is a prize-fighter, and the princess is an attractive and cultured lady of the world, who has, of course, inherited a large fortune. Along with the fortune, she has received from her father a letter full of considered advice, which concludes with this solemn warning on the subject of marriage: "Beware of men who have read more than they have worked, or who love to read better than to work. Do not forget that where the man is always at home, the woman is never happy. Beware of painters, poets, musicians, and artists of all sorts, except very great artists; beware even of them as husbands and fathers. Self-satisfied workmen who have learnt their business well, whether they be chancellors of the exchequer or farmers, I recommend to you as, on the whole, the most tolerable class of men I have met."[8] When the handsome young prize-fighter proposes to her, the heroine finds it impossible at first to take his avowals of love seriously. Then, with the discovery that this curious suitor is really the long-lost son of a genteel mother and the heir to a fortune of £5,000 a year, she suddenly realizes that she has found the ideal husband described in her father's letter. Moreover, she argues, by accepting the prize-fighter she will be giving a practical and eloquent demonstration of her advanced, scientific views. "I practically believe in the doctrine of heredity," she says, in defending her course before a scandalized friend. "And as my body is frail and my brain morbidly active, I think my impulse towards a man stronger in body and untroubled in mind a trustworthy one. You can understand that; it is a plain proposition in eugenics."[9] After their marriage, the lady and the prize-fighter enter upon a new and richer life: she turns from her books to the pleasant responsibilities of a wife and a mother; he deserts the ring for politics and is elected to parliament in the conservative interest.

In *Cashel Byron's Profession* Shaw's power of comic invention begins to appear for the first time. He exploits with gusto the possibilities of comic

[8] *Cashel Bryon's Profession*, 30. [9] *Ibid.*, 223.

incongruity which his theme is constantly offering him. It is not too much to say that one scene anticipates, in conception, at least, the famous situation in *Pygmalion* when Liza Doolittle stuns Chelsea society by marrying an impeccable accent to Billingsgate sentiments. Cashel Byron, the prize-fighter, finds himself in a soirée, where the principal attraction is a lecture by the learned German professor, Herr Abendgasse, on "The True in Art." Cashel, far from being struck by the ridiculous incongruity of his attending such an affair, listens eagerly to the lecture and discovers that his own experiences as a prize-fighter provide a peculiarly lucid commentary on the professor's ponderous generalizations. At the conclusion of the lecture, he is moved to address the astounded assembly:

> I made out from the gentleman's remarks that there is a man in the musical line named Wagner, who is what you might call a game sort of composer; and that the musical fancy, though they can't deny that his tunes are first-rate, and that, so to speak, he wins his fights, yet they try to make out that he wins them in an outlandish way, and that he has no real science. Now I tell the gentleman not to mind such talk. As I have just shown you, his game wouldn't be any use to him without science. He might have beaten a few second-raters with a rush while he was young; but he wouldn't have lasted out as he has done unless he was clever as well. It's the newness of his style that puzzles people; for, mind you, every man has to grow his own style out of himself; and there is no use in thinking that it will be the same as the last fellow's, or right for the next fellow, or that it's *the* style, and that every other style is wrong. More rot is talked through not knowing that than anything else. You will find that those that run Professor Wagner down are either jealous, or they are old stagers that are not used to his style, and think that anything new must be bad. Just wait a bit, and, take my word for it, they'll turn right round and swear that his style isn't new at all, and that he stole it from some one they saw when they were ten years old.[10]

Of all Shaw's novels, *Cashel Byron's Profession* attracted the most critical attention and received the greatest popular approval. After the inevitable round of publishers' refusals, it, like the two preceding novels, found a brief existence in a socialist periodical.[11] But it refused to lie buried in these obscure pages and by 1887 had achieved the dignity of book format.[12] Toward the end of the century, it became something of a best-seller in the United States. Shaw, in reviewing the American reception of his novels, tells us that "American ladies were seized with a desire to go on the stage and be Lydia Carew for two thrilling hours. American actors 'saw themselves' as Cashel. Mr. James Corbett has actually appeared on the New York stage in the part."[13] The sudden popularity of the novel stirred Shaw to bring out in 1901 a dramatized version, *The Admirable Bashville or Constancy Unrewarded*, in order to preserve the copyright.

[10] *Ibid.*, 89-90.

[11] *The Irrational Knot* was published in *Our Corner* between April, 1885, and February, 1887, and *Love among the Artists* in the same periodical, between November, 1887, and December, 1888. *Cashel Byron's Profession* was published in *To-Day* between April, 1885, and March, 1886. See Henderson, 103, 108-9.

[12] For an account of the various editions of *Cashel Byron's Profession*, see Henderson, 103-4.

[13] Preface to *Cashel Byron's Profession*, 10.

Shaw professed to be annoyed by the preference shown for *Cashel Byron's Profession* over his other novels and attributed its popularity to the deliberate way in which he had pandered to the schoolboy delight in a good fight.[14] Certainly the obvious gusto with which he wrote the prize-fight passages—passages which, he tells us, were solidly founded upon a little personal observation and a considerable amount of research in the British Museum and were conceived in the savagery of his imagination—strengthened the appeal of the novel. But the more reputable reason for its success lay, as Robert Louis Stevenson pointed out, in the tonic mixture of comedy and romance. "It is all mad, mad, mad," wrote Stevenson to William Archer, who had persuaded him to read *Cashel Byron's Profession*, "and deliriously delightful; the author has a taste in chivalry like Walter Scott's or Dumas's, and then he daubs in little bits of socialism; he soars away on the wings of the romantic griffin—even the griffin, as he cleaves the air, shouting with laughter at the nature of the quest—and I believe in his heart he thinks he is labouring in a quarry of solid granite realism—It is horrid fun."[15]

*An Unsocial Socialist* continues the vein of *Cashel Byron's Profession*, but with an important difference. Whereas *Cashel Byron's Profession*, as we have seen, might be described as a comic romance enlivened by the play of ideas, *An Unsocial Socialist* might be described as a play of ideas with an undercurrent of comic romance. The "little daubs of socialism" in the earlier novel, to which Stevenson referred, have spread to an alarming degree, and the predominating colour of Shaw's canvas is no longer a delicate pink but a bold and dazzling red. For some time now he had been engaged in the study of economics, and he had resolved "to give up mere character sketching and the construction of modes for improved types of individuals, and at once to produce a novel which should be a gigantic grapple with the whole social problem. But, alas! at twenty-seven one does not know everything. When I had finished two chapters of this enterprise—chapters of colossal length, but containing the merest preliminary matter—I broke down in sheer ignorance and incapacity."[16] *An Unsocial Socialist* is, on Shaw's word, the first two chapters of the contemplated *magnum opus*.

Certainly there is no reason to doubt that Shaw had a serious purpose in *An Unsocial Socialist*, that he meant the novel to be an indictment of capitalist society; but we can sympathize with John Morley, reporting on the book for Macmillan's, when he complained that readers "would not know whether the writer was serious or was laughing at them."[17] We are throughout in a world of refined social comedy: the scene shifts from a

[14] *Ibid.*, 11.

[15] *Letters of Robert Louis Stevenson*, ed. Sidney Colvin (New York, 1899), II, 107.

[16] "Mr. Bernard Shaw's Works of Fiction. Reviewed by Himself," *Novel Review* (Feb., 1892). Quoted by Henderson, 84.

[17] Morgan, *The House of Macmillan*, 127.

select boarding-school for girls in the country to West-End London mansions, and thence to the country home of a nobleman. The hero, Sidney Trefusis, may be a thorough-going socialist, but he is also a handsome young man of great wealth, an inveterate philanderer, and a Shelley-like romantic who fancies himself as a latter-day messiah. "With my egotism," he says, "my charlatanry, my tongue, and my habit of having my own way, I am fit for no calling but that of saviour of mankind."[18]

Whether we read *An Unsocial Socialist* as serious social criticism or light romantic comedy, or, best of all, gladly embrace and enjoy the two extremes, we must admit, I think, that this novel reveals an artist who has discovered himself, who writes always with sureness and often with commanding power. It is not surprising, therefore, that *An Unsocial Socialist* is the only one of the five novels, with the possible exception of *Cashel Byron's Profession*, that has found a place in the popular Shaw canon.

From this analysis it can be seen that the first three novels—*Immaturity*, *The Irrational Knot*, and *Love among the Artists*—have qualities in common that mark them off sharply from the last two novels—*Cashel Byron's Profession* and *An Unsocial Socialist*. The first three novels, for instance, are relentlessly serious in tone; wit of a heavy, intellectual kind there is in plenty, but no escapes into a world of comic fancy. The very reverse is true of the last two novels: they are creations of comic invention, and they are pervaded throughout by a tone of quixotic humour. And if we turn for a while to an examination of prose style, we shall find strong additional contrasts between the two groups of novels.

When he began his brief career as a novelist, Shaw tells us that he deliberately aimed at writing "nothing that should not be intelligible to a foreigner with a dictionary" and that he accordingly avoided idiom.[19] The results of this perverse principle are everywhere present in the early novels. The prose is marked by a self-conscious formality, by a strenuous effort at correctness and elegance that often succeed in being merely awkward and stilted. The sentences have a slow and ponderous movement; they creak painfully from clause to clause. Here, for instance, is an early descriptive passage:

> The pictures [in Mr. Grosvenor's gallery] represented remote incidents, derived from mythology, classic history, early Christianity, or personification of influences. A few of them, by their purity of intention, and evidence of a laborious effort to reach a region where even an honest glorying in technical craft would be too earthy an element, made themselves welcome to the capable spectator by the double appeal of their baffled weakness to his sympathy, and their masterly and hard-earned beauty to his admiration. The rest, bad imitations of these, depicted vacant persons with that vague aspect and indistinct eye, which is in nature the symptom of a bad cold in the head. They were foolishly conceived, and ill executed. At the end of the gallery, opposite to the entrance, the visitor might lift the green curtain and pass into a small apartment formed of dark purple velvet. Here hung a picture of enormous size, painted by Tintoretto, the insolent power of which contrasted as strongly with the works in the adjacent gallery as its luxurious purple surroundings with their faded drapery of green.[20]

[18] *An Unsocial Socialist*, 104. [19] Preface to *Immaturity*, 39. [20] *Immaturity*, 103.

Even the dialogue in the early novels fails to escape from the cramping restrictions that Shaw imposed on his style. Indeed, it is often a little less sprightly than the narrative and descriptive passages, for it labours under an additional handicap. In dialogue, Shaw explains, "I had, as the reader will probably find to his cost, the classical tradition which makes all the persons in the novel, except the comically vernacular ones, or the speakers of phonetically spelt dialect, utter themselves in the formal phrases and studied syntax of eighteenth century rhetoric."[21] Without pausing to question Shaw's ascription of literary influences (he might more reasonably have attributed this theory of dialogue to Scott and Thackeray), we need not take issue with his general analysis. The long rhetorical speech, which, as we shall see, becomes in the later novels a triumphant vehicle for Shaw's prose, suffers most under this burden of "formal phrases" and "studied syntax." In the following passage, the young hero of *Immaturity* is rebutting the argument that a certain distinguished contemporary artist derives his power from religious inspiration:

> On the contrary, [his pictures] don't contain one scrap of [religious devotion]. Angelico and Filippo Lippi and the rest of them painted as if they were sent on earth to glorify God. Mr. Donovan Browne paints as if he were self-dedicated to the task of painting beautiful pictures, or, in other words, of ennobling his fellow-creatures; and if we were not tired of the part of his genius which belongs to our own age, and blind to that which belongs to the infinite epoch of the highest art, we should draw a triumphant contrast instead of an apologetic comparison between him and an admirable but obsolete school which owed its concentration to mental narrowness.[22]

Both of the passages I have quoted are from *Immaturity*, and I do not want to suggest that the style of the two succeeding novels shows no development toward a greater flexibility and ease. But it is in *Cashel Byron's Profession* and, above all, in *An Unsocial Socialist*, that we first become aware of a radical change. The prose is now more idiomatic, the straining for elegancy is disappearing, and, above all, the sentences move forward at a greatly increased speed. It is this speed of movement, what Dixon Scott calls "the intoxicating ecstasy of pace,"[23] that most distinguishes the style of the last two novels.

To illustrate the qualities of the later style I have tried to select passages that would be roughly parallel to the two I have already quoted. But, significantly enough, it is difficult to find any extended passage of description in either *Cashel Byron's Profession* or *An Unsocial Socialist*. In his eager pursuit of the comic idea, Shaw seems to have no time to pause and to look around him. Instead of description we have rapid narration and extended passages of argumentative analysis, like the following:

> When Destiny takes nations into new places, it offers them the choice of marching boldly with it and understanding it, or being led like pigs to market, intensely recalcitrant, scuttling in sudden panics or charging in sudden huffs, and using such rests as its leader gives it, to eat, never to ask Whither? How? or What then? Only when Destiny gives

[21] Preface to *The Irrational Knot*, 8-9. [22] *Immaturity*, 270.

[23] "The Innocence of Bernard Shaw," in *Men of Letters* (London, 1916), 19.

the word to stop eating and march, a useless Why? is raised, whereupon Destiny, out of patience, gives the rope a jerk which fetches the poor pig off his trotters. England, observant of the fact that the pig's line of conduct shifted all moral responsibility to his leader, and got the pig finally to his destination without brain worry, adopted it without hesitation in Africa, with the result that when the king of a considerable people there fell, with his territories, into British hands, the conquest seemed useless, troublesome, and expensive; and after repeated attempts to settle the country on impracticable plans suggested to the Colonial Office by a popular historian who had made a trip to Africa, and by generals who were tired of their primitive remedy of killing the natives, it appeared that the best course was to release the king and get rid of the unprofitable booty by restoring it to him.[24]

It is an easy enough matter to find examples of the long rhetorical speech in the last two novels. Indeed, *An Unsocial Socialist* is almost an extended harangue, punctuated occasionally by violent action. In this passage, the hero is attacking the assumption that the artist should have a favoured position in society:

Now, no men are greater sticklers for the arbitrary dominion of genius and talent than your artists. The great painter is not satisfied with being sought after and admired because his hands can do more than ordinary hands, which they truly can, but he wants to be fed as if his stomach needed more food than ordinary stomachs, which it does not. A day's work is a day's work, neither more nor less, and the man who does it needs a day's sustenance, a night's repose, and due leisure, whether he be painter or ploughman. But the rascal of a painter, poet, novelist, or other voluptuary in labor, is not content with his advantage in popular esteem over the ploughman; he also wants an advantage in money, as if there were more hours in a day spent in the studio or library than in the field; or as if he needed more food to enable him to do his work than the ploughman to enable him to do his. He talks of the higher quality of his work, as if the higher quality of it were of his own making—as if it gave him a right to work less for his neighbor than his neighbor works for him—as if the ploughman could not do better without him than he without the ploughman—as if the value of the most celebrated pictures has not been questioned more than that of any straight furrow in the arable world—as if it did not take an apprenticeship of as many years to train the hand and eye of a mason or blacksmith as of an artist—as if, in short, the fellow were a god, as canting brain-worshippers have for years past been assuring him he is. Artists are the high priests of the modern Moloch. Nine out of ten of them are diseased creatures, just sane enough to trade on their own neuroses. The only quality of theirs which extorts my respect is a certain sublime selfishness which makes them willing to starve and to let their families starve sooner than do any work they don't like.[25]

To analyse passages such as these so as to show how Shaw achieves the effect of dazzling speed is not easy. Shaw himself would discourage even the attempt at analysis, for he has always maintained that his mature prose style is simply the effective statement of clear ideas. But I might draw attention to the close interlocking of clauses, to the way in which balance and antithesis are repeatedly used without sacrificing the idea to a stylized pattern, to the masterly employment of the periodic sentence that carries the reader unprotestingly along to the triumphant conclusion. And I might also draw attention to the kind of word that Shaw uses—words that are chastely devoid of sensuous appeal, that convey information

[24] *Cashel Byron's Profession*, 104.
[25] *An Unsocial Socialist*, 74-5.

or draw a sharp moral or intellectual distinction and seem to cut through instantaneously to the reader's mind.

The prose that Shaw was developing in his last two novels is certainly a prose of great power and beauty, but it is not, one must admit, an ideal instrument for the novelist. Certainly it is not adapted to the patient analysis of human motivation, to the careful evocation of a mood, nor can it sustain an extended narrative, unless the narrative is made to move with unrealistic speed. It is the prose of the pamphleteer, of the journalist, if you like, provided you admit that the journalist should have an impassioned concern with morals and society. And it is the prose of the rhetorician, prose that is meant to be declaimed from a public platform or from the stage of a theatre.

The direction of Shaw's artistic development during his brief career as a novelist is now clear: he has moved away from the didactic problem novel to what is almost a comic extravaganza, without, in the process, abandoning his role of serious social critic; and he has freed himself from a heavy and imitative prose, at its pedestrian best only in passages of analysis and description, in order to develop a prose that is supple and swift, superbly adapted to the rhetorical speech and the impassioned argument. How can we account for such profound changes? Only in an examination of Shaw's intellectual development during his early years in London can we find a satisfactory answer to this question.

When Shaw arrived in London in 1876 to join his mother and one surviving sister, he knew a good deal, for a young man of twenty, about music and painting and very little about anything else. His education had been almost completely non-academic, acquired, for the most part, by soaking himself in music at home and by frequenting the Dublin art galleries. He was able to make his way socially in London, he tells us, because he could play an acceptable accompaniment and was, therefore, tolerated at polite evening parties.[26] The music that he knew best was romantic music—the operas of Bizet, Gounod, and Verdi; and the literature that he had read most avidly was romantic literature—the poetry of Byron and Shelley, the novels of Victor Hugo, Scott, and Dumas. Chiefly on the basis of these biographical facts, Dixon Scott, whose early essay is still one of the few critical attempts to come to grips with Shaw's work, builds up a picture of the complete romantic who becomes gradually ensnared in a world of hard *isms* and prostitutes his magnificent, poetic talents in the service of intellectual movements to which he is, at heart, profoundly averse. Certainly we must not lose sight of this strong romantic strain; but to understand Shaw, as to understand all great artists, we must be wary of over-simplification. Even as a youth Shaw was a much more complex person than Dixon Scott would have us believe.

If in 1876 he had a romantic temperament and could soak himself "lusciously in the licensed orgies and ecstasies of music," he was also a

[26] See preface to *The Irrational Knot*, 11 ff.

young man with a restless and inquisitive mind in search of a satisfying intellectual creed. Before he left Ireland, he had already achieved a certain notoriety in family circles for his disposition to question accepted beliefs. Arrived in London, he gravitated inevitably to rationalist and scientific circles and eagerly assumed the complete panoply of ideas that distinguished the advanced Victorian intellectual. In his description of a debating society that he joined in the winter of 1879, Shaw has given us an excellent analysis of the kind of intellectual atmosphere in which he lived during his first years in London:

> The Zetetical Society [was] a junior copy of the once well known Dialectical Society which had been founded to discuss Stuart Mill's essay on Liberty when that was new. Both societies were strongly Millite. In both there was complete freedom of discussion, political, religious and sexual. Women took an important part in the debates, a special feature of which was that each speaker, at the conclusion of his speech, could be cross examined on it by any of the others in a series of questions. The tone was strongly individualistic, atheistic, Malthusian, evolutionary, Ingersollian, Darwinian, Herbert Spencerian. Huxley, Tyndall and George Eliot were on the shelves of all the members. . . . Socialism was regarded as an exploded fallacy; and nobody dreamt that within five years it would revive, snatch away all the younger generation, and sweep the Dialectical and Zetetical into the blind cave of eternal night.[27]

Shaw's first novels were written while he was eagerly absorbing the ideas promulgated in societies like these. Especially in *Immaturity* and in *The Irrational Knot* do we see the influence of rationalist and scientific thought. His heroes have exactly the same combination of intense moral earnestness and uncompromising infidelity that distinguishes so many of the "advanced" Victorian writers. Conolly in *The Irrational Knot* might be a portrait of Thomas Henry Huxley before Huxley's immaculate scientific faith was assailed by certain stubborn facts of human experience. Like the early Huxley, he believes that it is possible to mark off an area of life that is "knowable," because subject to undeviating laws of nature, and to dismiss all else as "unknowable," and, therefore, irrelevant. Once this principle is accepted and acted upon, life resolves into a clear and rational pattern. Conolly's wife describes him as a man "never without a purpose, never with a regret, [who] regards life as a succession of objects each to be accomplished by so many days' work; [who] takes [his] pleasure in trifling lazily with the consciousness of possessing a strong brain; [who] studies love, family affection, and friendship as a doctor studies breathing or digestion; [who] looks on disinterestedness as either weakness or hypocrisy, and on death as a mere transfer of your social function to some member of the next generation."[28]

Although the influence of scientific and rationalist thought is strongly evident in the first three novels and, more than anything else, accounts for their similarity of tone, I do not want to suggest that, at this time, the young Shaw had found an intellectual faith that he could embrace with single-minded devotion. Shaw's portrait of himself in *Immaturity* as the young

[27] Shaw to Archibald Henderson, Jan. 17, 1905. Quoted in Henderson, 121.
[28] *The Irrational Knot*, 189.

free-thinker and agnostic is done with a half-amused, ironical objectivity. Although Conolly, the rationalist spokesman in *The Irrational Knot*, towers heroically over the other characters in the novel, he does not emerge as a completely sympathetic figure. Often Shaw is happiest with minor characters who are neither free-thinkers nor even intellectuals, but are energetic, successful types who have worked out a practical compromise with life and have embraced a simple gospel of common sense. And in the last novel of this group, *Love among the Artists*, the rationalist hero has disappeared altogether; his place is now taken by the romantic individualist, for whom excellence in art, as in life, can be gauged by emotional sincerity and by devotion to an ideal of beauty.

We must recognize, then, that the writer of these early novels is, in many respects, a complex and mature person. Yet, somehow or other, he fails to make vital the rich diversities in his own mind. His novels give an impression of aridity; they reveal a writer with a great many talents who has not yet learned how to put those talents into triumphant action. We may find one reason for these inadequacies, as I have suggested, in the resolute attempt of the young Shaw to convert the dry bones of rationalism into the flesh and blood of art. For a second and more compelling reason, we must look elsewhere; we must examine the stage Shaw had reached in his speculations about the economic structure of society.

Up until the time Shaw finished *Love among the Artists* and began to write *Cashel Byron's Profession*, his attitude toward the economic structure of society had been determined, not by analysis or theory, but by the hard facts of personal experiences. These experiences, it must be clearly borne in mind, were not of a kind to provide material for a romantic story of the barefoot peasant lad, proud of his honest poverty and haughtily contemptuous of the vulgar ostentation of the rich. The truth of the matter is, of course, that Shaw heartily despised the proletariat and diligently sought out the society of the wealthy and the refined. He gradually became aware of an economic problem not because his poverty made him a social outcast and cut him off completely from sources of emotional and intellectual pleasure but because his income was inadequate to gain him admission to polite society. And the young immigrant felt his plight all the more keenly when he reflected that he came from a genuinely superior family, that his father had aristocratic connections and had unequivocal claims to the title of "gentleman." "If you would know what real poverty is," wrote Shaw in his most revealing autobiographical statement, "ask the younger son of a younger son of a younger son. To understand his plight you must start at the top without the income of the top, and curse your stars that you were not lucky enough to start at the bottom."[29] The economic problem for Shaw was then, at this time, merely a personal problem: how could he, a member of a pathetically small and disorganized group, made up of "the Shabby Genteel, the Poor Relations, the Gentlemen who are no

[29]Preface to *Immaturity*, 6.

Gentlemen,"[30] ever hope to find a position in society befitting the high estimate of his own worth? The problem was apparently insoluble. He had to resign himself to being an outsider, refusing to descend to the level of the poor and incapable of reaching the level of the rich. Looking back on those unhappy days, Shaw relentlessly recalls that he was "ashamed of his poverty, in continual dread of doing the wrong thing, resentfully insubordinate and seditious in a social order which he not only accepted but in which he actually claimed a privileged part."[31]

It is here—in this picture of the confusion and uncertainty that characterized Shaw's attitude toward the economic structure of society—that we find our second reason for the inadequacies of the early novels. His novels are about the wealthy and the aristocratic; they show an almost morbid consciousness of economic distinctions; and yet he has no consistent point of view toward the society he depicts. He seems to waver between an inclination to idealize a class to which, he is convinced, he rightfully belongs, and a feeling of resentment that wealth and social prestige should so often be accompanied by a cultural development immeasurably inferior to his own.

What Shaw needed, then, both to clarify his own personal problems and to give strength and direction to the works of his imagination was a plausible and consistent critical attitude toward the economic structure of society. The impetus to the development of such a critical attitude came with dramatic suddenness. On the night of September 5, 1882, possibly after he had finished writing five more pages of his fourth novel, *Cashel Byron's Profession*, he wandered into a lecture given by Henry George. George was a radical, but not of the orthodox Victorian stamp: "he spoke of Liberty, Justice, Truth, Natural Law, and other strange eighteenth century superstitions"; he attacked scientific materialism and "explained with great simplicity and sincerity the views of the Creator, who had gone completely out of fashion in London in the previous decade and had not been heard of since."[32] George's radicalism was purely economic; like Ruskin, he felt that man had bound himself to a set of cruel and stupid economic principles. "It flashed on me then for the first time," wrote Shaw, "that 'the conflict between Religion and Science' . . . the overthrow of the Bible, the higher education of women, Mill on Liberty, and all the rest of the storm that raged round Darwin, Tyndall, Huxley, Spencer and the rest, on which I had brought myself up intellectually, was a mere middle-class business. Suppose it could have produced a nation of Matthew Arnolds and George Eliots!—You may well shudder. The importance of the economic basis dawned on me."[33] After hearing George's lecture, Shaw plunged into a course of economic study, which in a few months culminated in his reading Marx's *Das Kapital* and his conversion to socialism.

If we are to understand the significance for Shaw the man and the

[30] *Ibid.*, 8. [31] *Ibid.*, 16.
[32] Shaw to Hamlin Garland, Dec. 29, 1904. Quoted in Henderson, 149.
[33] Henderson, 151-2.

artist of this espousal of socialism, we must be clear on two points. In the first place, Shaw came to socialism not through his own harsh experience of the economic inequalities of society, and certainly not through the awakening of his humanitarian passion. His conversion was largely an affair of the mind, and it bore fruit in practical activity, not, for instance, in the form of settlement work among the poor in London, but in the form of speeches from the public platform and lectures to groups of intellectuals. In the second place, his socialism is not a fervently revolutionary faith even at this early stage when he is technically a follower of Marx. Indeed, much of the value of socialism consists for him in the solution it offers for his own personal problems. Now that he has a coherent theory, he finds that he can adjust himself with ease to the present economic structure of society while, at the same time, he looks forward to the ultimate communist Utopia of absolute equality.

What are the effects on Shaw the artist of this shift to a socialist analysis of society? Shaw's last two novels, especially *An Unsocial Socialist*, provide the evidence for a preliminary answer to this question. In the first part of this article I have already indicated what the general characteristics of these novels are. It remains now to relate those characteristics to the intellectual development I have been sketching.

As a result of the new direction his intellectual development had taken, Shaw did not become, even faintly, a proletarian novelist. You will find in his last two novels no scenes depicting the harsh sufferings of the workers under capitalism. In only one chapter of *An Unsocial Socialist*, written in the first flush of his conversion, do the oppressed workers, who are presumably never absent from the hero's thoughts since they are continuously present in his speeches, make their appearance; and on that occasion the scene is merely an excuse for introducing a satiric pantomime at the expense of classical theories of economy. Shaw the socialist has not lost his respect for Mammon; indeed he realizes with a new and compelling vividness that the desire for and acquisition of money is the root of all good.

Finally, Shaw's romantic imagination and his power of comic invention, far from being stifled by his immersion in the dismal science, have been gloriously released. The parallel here between Shaw and Samuel Butler is especially striking. Shaw found in *Das Kapital* what Butler, twenty-five years before, had found in *The Origin of Species*—a new and exhilarating explanation of the mystery of experience, and a wealth of fascinating ideas that provided both the inspiration and the materials for literary expression. In the vision of a communist Utopia, Shaw found an ideal that would satisfy his romantic yearnings. In the socialist demonstration of the glaring incongruities underlying the economic structure of society, he found just the material he needed for the exercise of his comic genius. Henceforth he could be a social critic and a moralist without fear of falling into dullness and didacticism; for he now saw that the final truth of a matter reveals itself only to the artist-philosopher who combines a passionate imagination with an exquisite levity of mind.

# MATTHEW ARNOLD AND IRELAND

WILLIAM ROBBINS

WHEN Frederic Harrison declared with some acerbity that "the man of culture is in politics the poorest mortal alive," a verdict which Arnold was to quote against himself with mock humility on several occasions, he expressed the common view of Arnold's political pronouncements. His phrasing, unfortunately for him, struck Arnold as exuberantly Philistine, and it naturally suggests a query as to which is at fault, the man of culture or politics. Yet there is general agreement that Arnold, when he forsook broad critical principles and got down to political cases, was not a sound observer. Certainly his letters and essays offer erratic judgments on the political scene in Italy, on Franco-Prussian relations, and on matters of domestic policy. In the field of education, of course, his experience as school inspector and foreign observer produced penetrating and significant social criticism with valid political generalizations. But the fact remains that even enthusiastic admirers would find it difficult to champion Arnold as a political commentator.

This negative finding must be qualified by one important exception. With respect to the Irish question, one of the persistent major problems of English politics, Arnold's prophetic insight is weak, but there is in his writing on this subject a rare blend of sound diagnosis, practical remedial proposals, and a balanced historical perspective. It is true that he showed no appreciation of the prophetic insight in Gladstone's Irish policy, or of what may be called its evolutionary necessity. He condemned Gladstone first for not doing enough, and then, with Home Rule, for going too far. But they were moving in the same general direction, with an impulse the result of more than mere expediency and aiming at more than mere compromise. It is tempting, in Arnold's case, to bring in the Celtic inheritance from his Cornish mother to account for his interest in and sympathy with the Irish, but such speculations are unnecessary. The fact is that in the Irish situation and its background there was not only something to appeal to the cosmopolitan mind and the romantic imagination, but also a perfect case for the application of the doctrines which developed through Arnold's reading, thinking, and experience to merge in *Culture and Anarchy* as the gospel of "sweetness and light."

The historical aspect of the relations between Ireland and England, in terms of conquest, rebellion, and re-conquest, with all the misery that economic helotage could bring the Irish, is too well known to need detailed recounting. Military subjugation, anti-Catholicism, and economic exploitation combined to create a situation which at its best showed complete misunderstanding by the dominant power, and at its more frequent worst a savage oppression which ignored any claims of justice and humanity. There was one decade when, with Presbyterian Ulster and Catholic Ireland

united against commercial strangulation, and with the temper of England, after the fairly quiescent domestic period in the later eighteenth century, on the whole easy-going and latitudinarian, a generous and workable compromise might have been arrived at. According to Trevelyan, "any time in the decade following 1782, a Reform Bill, Catholic Emancipation, and the payment of the Catholic priests by the Government would have diverted the whole history of Ireland into happier channels."[1] The only alternative to large concessions to Irish demands was the extermination of the Irish people, as those who appreciated the nature of the Irish temper and background realized. This was hardly an acceptable alternative, even for Tory and Protestant intolerance.[2] But neither were large concessions contemplated by Pitt and his ministers. Instead, the Union of 1800 wiped out the Irish Parliament and imposed a Protestant ascendancy in a spirit of religious tyranny completely at odds with the treatment accorded Scotland in 1707. It is true Pitt tried to put through a measure of Catholic Emancipation, but the opposition of George III made him drop it. The chance for a solution passed, and the end of the decade saw any slight gains wiped out, with increased political and religious disadvantages superadded to the economic. The policy of oppression meeting rebellion, of last-ditch resistance followed by grudging concession, which was to mark Anglo-Irish relations throughout the nineteenth century, was established in this, "England's first failure to know her appointed hour."[3] More than that, it convinced Irishmen that only by extortion could concessions be wrung from England, and throughout the century, in spite of the liberal and compromising elements in the temper shown by the great leader O'Connell, the weapons of protest were outrage and terrorism, followed almost invariably by savage retaliation and severer criminal laws. In fact, Anglo-Irish relations definitely take on the attributes of the vicious circle, though the viciousness softens at times as one painfully-wrung concession after another is made.

This is not the whole story, of course. There were far-sighted and statesmanlike Englishmen in each generation who did their best to effect a just and generous solution of this thorniest of England's problems, but they were defeated by the combination of anti-Catholic feeling, vested landlord and commercial interests, and aristocratic hatred of popular agitation, to mention only three more important causes. And if *laissez-faire* economics was an obstacle in the way of reforms for English workers, it was even more inimical to reforms for Irish peasants. The peasant life was to many industrially-minded Englishmen something that was doomed to extinction, and a good thing too. Hence indifferentism was an added barrier to Irish

[1]G. M. Trevelyan, *British History in the Nineteenth Century* (London, 1922), 101.

[2]That it was still the only alternative as late as 1921, on the eve of the setting-up of the Irish Free State, is shown by the blunt (if variously worded) warnings of the Liberal Asquith and the Tory Birkenhead.

[3]Trevelyan, *British History in the Nineteenth Century*, 100.

reform. From the violently-opposed Catholic Emancipation in 1829 to the Disestablishment of the Irish Church in 1869, there was gradual improvement in the religious and in the political situation. But the fundamental problem, economic adjustment and reform in an agricultural country, remained untouched, in spite of the increasing number of inquiries and commissions. The periodic famines, followed by wholesale starvation and emigration, aroused no general comment; in fact, absentee landlords through their agents increased evictions to appalling numbers. It took the Fenian outrages to make people realize that there was still an Irish problem, and Gladstone, the first British statesman in whose thought the Irish problem was central, took the first step towards an economic solution in his Irish Land Act of 1870. The need for this belated reform is pithily summed up by J. L. Hammond: "In 1870 the condition of the English workers is better, that of the Irish peasant worse, than in 1800."[4] Many excellent proposals were put forward in the period from 1830 to 1870, for land settlement and housing, for state-owned railways, for agricultural education, for consideration of church tithes and landlord-tenant-cotter relations, all with a view to establishing certain rights which would not leave the Irish peasant entirely at the mercy of absentee landlordism. But such proposals met a powerful coalition which wrecked them, the coalition of the great English landlords and the "Protestant garrison" in Ireland, politically supreme since 1800.

The combination of prejudice, selfishness, and blindness was too powerful even for Gladstone, whose political vision and tenacity of purpose made him "the Englishman best able and most likely to make a serious effort to reconcile England and Ireland."[5] A plan to give the Prince of Wales a ceremonial position, with a court in Ireland, was vetoed by the Queen, and a suggested amalgamation of the universities in Ireland on a non-theological basis was killed by the Catholic bishops. When he got down to the economic basis, Gladstone succeeded in passing the Land Act of 1870, described even by Irishmen as "a noble and generous advance." The main purpose of the bill was to give a tenant right of possession over improvements, and to provide damages for eviction. But any control of landlord privilege was so obnoxious to the Lords that amendments were tacked on that almost negated the last clause. And the Irish would not have been satisfied in any case. What they wanted was security *against* eviction, not compensation *for* eviction. Here was the traditional policy of killing a reform by qualifications or negating the good effects by new severities. The effect of granting under pressure is clearly illustrated in the next Gladstone Government of 1880-5. A bill of Compensation for Disturbance was thrown out by the Lords. Arnold's brother-in-law, Forster, who advanced the bill, had then to introduce a bill for Coercion to meet the urgent condition of affairs in Ireland, where men were now

[4]J. L. Hammond, *Gladstone and the Irish Nation* (London, 1938), 22. [5]*Ibid.*, 67.

fighting for the famous three F's—fair rent, fixed tenure, and free sale. Yet if the Coercion Act was drastic, the Land Act of the same year was almost revolutionary in its advance toward the three F's. An even more liberal bill, the Arrears bill, was passed in 1882, but the Phoenix Park murders were answered by another Coercion bill in the same year. The vicious circle was in operation again, and was apparently as hard to break as ever. And all during this period had been growing up, with Parnell as its potent leader from 1880, the movement for Home Rule. This Gladstone came to see, against his earlier convictions, as the only, the inevitable, solution of the Irish problem. This was the reef on which his third ministry was wrecked, after a few hectic months in 1886. And this, finally, the dominant issue of his political life, was the policy which brought the severest censure from his unrelenting critic Matthew Arnold.

Arnold's opposition to Gladstone, and his unjust depreciation of that statesman, is an involved and delicate matter.[6] Gladstone's quixotic sallies into Homeric and biblical criticism seemed irrelevant and incompetent to him, alien as they were to what he considered the truly modern spirit. His own religious criticism annoyed and alarmed Gladstone's orthodox piety. The political issue was, however, more important. Arnold called himself "a Liberal, but a Liberal of the future, a Liberal tempered by renouncement," anticipating Birrell's statement that "Liberalism is not a creed but a frame of mind." His crusade against the party weaknesses of the Liberals, their catchwords, clap-trap, and sensitivity to popular pressure, led him to attribute to their greatest leader, quite unjustly, the possession of these defects in their quintessence. He considered Gladstone a great orator but a political opportunist, "a bewitching, a fascinating personality, but a dangerous minister," in short, a politician rather than a statesman. Yet the failure to do justice to Gladstone must be balanced by the frank tribute of Morley, who says of Arnold's approach to the problem of Ireland: "In truth, his insight into the roots of the Irish case, and the strong persistence with which he pressed that case upon unwilling ears, were in some ways the most remarkable instance of his many-sided and penetrating vision."[7]

Several factors combined to make this political application of Arnold's doctrines sound and penetrating. His feeling for the romantic Celtic strain as a leavening element in the British make-up compelled his sympathy; his literary cosmopolitanism made him sensitive to foreign criticism of the English handling of the Irish problem; and this sympathy and

[6]Gladstone had in 1883 given him a pension, but he had also in 1866, 1867, and 1882 turned down or ignored applications by Arnold for three different posts. Nor had he any sympathy for Arnold's ideas on copyright. The feeling which developed is hinted at in John Morley's reference to "another poet, with no eye on patronage or pension" (*Life of William Ewart Gladstone* (London, 1903), II, 541). Yet Morley admits that the pension was one which Arnold's "friends made him accept."

[7]Morley, *Recollections* (Toronto, 1917), I, 129.

sensitivity led him to study the historical facts with more than usual thoroughness. His moral sense was appealed to by the patent fact that the backwardness and suffering were to a large extent caused by tyranny and neglect. Every practical reform he had come to advocate—religious tolerance, improved education, political power vested in the state with room for the individual's expansion—was badly needed in Ireland. And since the things he came to urge for Ireland were the things he had been urging for years upon the attention of his fellow-Englishmen, his whole approach was consistent. If Englishmen wished the long struggle to end, with the Irish absorbed into the Empire, co-operating with the English, admiring their virtues and imitating their ways, Arnold applauded the wish. But why should the Irishman feel anything but contempt, as well as hatred, for the middle-class English Philistine, with his hard, unlovely, crass ways? "When shall we learn," asked Arnold in 1867, "that what attaches people to us is the spirit we are of, and not the machinery we employ?"[8] Here, of course, is the central doctrine of Arnold at work, the emphasis upon a national best self and a civilization synonymous with a high culture and a flexible mind. What was needed was the removal of "the main ground of the Celt's alienation from the Englishman, by substituting, in place of that type of Englishman with whom alone the Celt has too long been familiar, a new type, more intelligent, more gracious, and more humane."[9]

The whole situation is summed up in one of the most effective passages of sustained irony in Arnold's writing. The concreteness of application gives a rare fire to his gospel of culture, when he depicts Irish grievances against a background of the grossest Philistinism.

> In the first place, it never was any part of our creed that the great right and blessedness of an Irishman, or, indeed, of anybody on earth except an Englishman, is to do as he likes; and we can have no scruple at all about abridging, if necessary, a non-Englishman's assertion of personal liberty. The British Constitution, its checks, and its prime virtues, are for Englishmen. We may extend them to others out of love and kindness; but we find no real Divine Law written on our hearts constraining us so to extend them. And then the difference between an Irish Fenian and an English rough is so immense, and the case, in dealing with the Fenian, so much more clear! He is so evidently desperate and dangerous, a man of a conquered race, a Papist, with centuries of ill-usage to inflame him against us, with an alien religion established in his country by us at his expense, with no admiration for our institutions, no love of our virtues, no talents for our business, no turn for our comfort! Show him our symbolical Truss Manufactory on the finest site in Europe, and tell him that British industrialism and British individualism can bring a man to that, and he remains cold! Evidently, if we deal tenderly with a sentimentalist like this, it is out of pure philanthropy![10]

Arnold naturally condemned Irish methods of protest. With his dislike for anarchy in any form, he always advocated a strong hand in putting down rebellion and outrage. Of the two schools of thought on the Irish question in later nineteenth-century politics, that which advocated stern measures first in order to have peace and quiet for reform and that which

[8]Arnold, *Celtic Literature; Works* (London, 1903), V, xvii. [9]*Ibid.*, xxi.
[10]Arnold, *Culture and Anarchy; Works*, VI, 54.

demanded justice first in the belief that peace and harmony would follow, Arnold leaned to the former. Yet he was no supporter of mere coercion. The Irish "must be brought back to order when they are disorderly; but they must be brought, also, to acquiesce in the English connection by good and just treatment."[11] What Arnold disliked was making concessions to force or bluster. His sense of the double weakness in the history of England's relations with Ireland is clearly put in the preface to the extracts from Burke, where he enumerates the causes of the deep-seated hostility: "The tyranny of the grantees of confiscation; of the English garrison; Protestant ascendancy; the reliance of the English Government upon this ascendancy and its instruments as their means of government; the yielding to menaces of danger and insurrection what was never yielded to consideration of equity and reason; the recurrence to the old perversity of mismanagement as soon as ever the danger was passed."[12] This belief that concessions should be made out of strength rather than weakness finds expression in a letter to his mother eighteen years earlier. The failure to handle an English mob has, he feels, encouraged the Fenian outbreaks. "Who can wonder at these Irish, who have cause to hate us, and who do not own their allegiance to us, making war on a State and society which has shown itself irresolute and feeble."[13]

The fullest expression of Arnold's position is given in the essay "The Incompatibles," first published in April, 1881. It is interesting for three reasons. The influence of Burke is obvious, particularly in the theme that concessions lose their value if deferred, or if they are the result of fear. Again, the essay suggests a contrast with the tone of Arnold's writing in *The Times* and the *Nineteenth Century* exactly five years later, when he attacked Gladstone and Home Rule with a sharpness the result of alarm. Here he is genial to Gladstone's recent Land Act, though he feels that it does not really get at the fundamentals. But there is a sympathy that results from a conscious similarity of direction. Finally, the essay is an excellent example of Arnold's application of his general teaching to a specific and suitable problem. From the first part, with its analysis of the Irish situation and its recommendations, he passes to a more general consideration of the Anglo-Irish relationship in terms of what to him is the only hope for a permanent and harmonious settlement.

Taking as his cue the simple injunction of Burke regarding Irish reforms, "our measures must be healing," Arnold treats the two vital questions of land and religion. He begins with a bird's-eye historical sketch, proving by quotations from Spenser, Swift, and General Gordon that the squalor, misery, and suffering of the Irish peasant have always struck competent observers of the Irish scene and are little, if at all, improved. With everything that can be said against the Irish, and Arnold quotes freely here too,

[11]Arnold, "The Incompatibles," *Irish Essays; Works*, XI, 26.
[12]*Works*, XI, 442. [13]*Ibid.*, XIV, 151.

the real trouble lies in a coalition of English prejudices—the religious prejudice against Catholicism of the Puritan middle class and the selfish prejudice against dispossession of the landowning aristocratic class. In his attitude to the reforms implemented so far, Arnold's emphasis on national character and on motive, and his dislike for political formulas about property and religion, come out clearly. The Disestablishment of the Irish Church was a good move, but it was largely a result of nonconformist antipathy to establishments. The Irish, he says, are not impressed. The Land Acts are good, but they are mere palliatives and do not face the issue courageously. They do not face the fact that the great Irish landlords are not like the old landowners of England, who put money back into their lands and gave protection and consideration to their tenants. Arnold suggests the formation of two commissions, one with power at least to expropriate the bad landlords, and even to wipe out tenant-right and give the peasant ownership of his land, as Stein did in Prussia, the other with power to arrange suitable endowments for Catholic education and the Catholic religion in Ireland.[14] The current attempts are dictated by pedantic formulas with no reference to the facts of the case, and hampered by the mutually bolstering weight of two persistent prejudices, regarding land and religion, in England's upper and middle classes. The practical implications are not worked out in detail—what Arnold wants is order and justice. And when an imaginary interlocutor reminds him that these reforms are impossible, in their revolutionary treatment of property and religion, because of the prevailing temper of the English people, Arnold answers, "The English people are improvable, I hope." This remark, containing the purpose and hope of Arnold's long cultural crusade, carries the whole question at once into a larger sphere.

The two grievances of Ireland, says Arnold, are moral and material. The Land Act of 1881 he admits goes some distance to rectify the material grievance, but it does nothing for the moral one. A more *equitable* measure, like Stein's land bill in Prussia, would rectify both. If, however, the Land Act were accompanied by a redressing of the wrongs done Catholicism, then there might be a chance of cheerful acquiescence pending a final settlement. For cheerful acquiescence is necessary to continued connection, and the breaking of the English-Irish connection Arnold declares

[14]Augustine Birrell, while describing the Land Act of 1881 as a great personal triumph for Gladstone, allows the case for Land Purchase. "This had long been the view of Bright, who was now powerfully reinforced by Matthew Arnold. On the other hand the Radical group of the Liberal Party strongly objected to the buying off of bad landlords; and the Conservative Party, when it finally passed Land Purchase, was surprised to find that it in turn had failed to solve the Irish problem." (*Gladstone* (London, 1933), 107.) That the Land Purchase acts, culminating in the Wyndham Act of 1903, might not appeal to an Irishman as a perfect example of the "justice" Arnold advocated is seen in the satirical comment of Dorothy Macardle: "It was the most 'generous' of the Government's 'concessions'; it enabled Irishmen to buy back from the heirs of the confiscators portions of the confiscated land" (*The Irish Republic* (London, 1937), 61).

would be ruin for both Ireland and England.[15] And here the characteristic Arnoldian line comes in. More than equity is needed for cheerful acquiescence in the relationship—the dominant civilization must be made to appear attractive. The English aristocracy, he agrees with Carlyle, displays certain attractive features. But it is the industrious and unimaginative, earnest but gross middle-class Philistine with whom the sensitive and imaginative Irishman comes in contact. It is his life which must be made more attractive. And since the day of the upper classes is over, it is just as important for English civilization as for Irish acquiescence that this increasingly powerful middle class be leavened and enlightened.

At this point any faithful reader of Arnold would begin to quote from memory. "Porro unum est necessarium"—improved secondary education for the middle classes. Arnold makes great play with Salem House and Mr. Creakle, with Murdstone and Quinion. Here are the institutions and products characteristic of the English middle class, resulting in "a defective type of religion, a narrow range of intellect and knowledge, a stunted sense of beauty, a low standard of manners."[16] Neither the unpleasantly righteous Murdstone nor the heavily jovial Quinion could possibly have any appeal for the Celtic imagination. They constitute instead a source of repulsion. They need transforming. Arnold points without hesitation to specific faults in the Irish, but the onus, he insists, is on the English. He summarizes his function as a critic neatly at the end of the essay: "to exhort my countrymen to healing measures and an attractive form of civilization."[17] In the essay "An Unregarded Irish Grievance," Arnold reviews a report that pictures the hopeless condition of Irish schools, and points out that here is a specific Irish grievance resulting from that English distrust of state interference which explains Salem House, and from English anti-Catholicism. Ireland must have her own education to suit her Catholic majority—she must also be allowed to use state organization even if English prejudice refuses to see the advantage of it. Here Arnold as usual compares England with the Continent, to the discredit of the former. Does Ireland really wish adequate education? Then let Irishmen "demand that their secondary instruction shall be made a public service, with the honest single-minded, logically-pursued aim of efficiency."[18]

This insistence on a more attractive civilization, welding Ireland to England by stronger links than even imposed order plus perfect justice could supply, is then the contribution of Arnold the educationist, critic, and cultured observer. It is the doctrine developed in his general teaching; Ireland offers a good case for the application of the remedial principles. On the political side his remedy for Irish economic and political grievances was a greater degree of local self-government. This too he was fond of

[15]It is easy to overlook the strength and honesty of this conviction which, along with less creditable motives, the memoirs of statesmen show to have been present in the stand of even the seemingly selfish and reactionary.

[16]*Works*, XI, 62. [17]*Ibid.*, 78. [18]*Ibid.*, 102.

advocating for England in the interests of efficiency, and his extension of the idea to Irish affairs is again consistent. But he was always opposed to the idea of an Irish Parliament, and his truce with Gladstone definitely came to an end in December, 1885, when the latter divulged his intentions regarding Home Rule. The spate of articles and letters in 1886-7, the harsh and almost shrill tone of his attacks on Gladstone, and the recurrent references to the Irish problem in his correspondence all testify to his genuine alarm. He believed his letter to *The Times* in May, 1886, had done good in America, where he was on his second visit, "by drawing the distinction between giving to the Irish legislative control over their own local affairs, and giving to them *a single national legislative body* to exercise such control. They all here go off saying, 'Of course Ireland ought to have Home Rule just as all our States have,' and till the thing is pressed on their attention they do not see the difference between what their States have and what Gladstone proposes to do."[19] Arnold was consistent enough; he lectured Lord Salisbury and the Conservatives on the need for remedying the Irish grievances as strongly as he had denounced the Gladstonian policy. "The fatal thing at this moment is drifting. . . . Lord Clanricarde as an Irish landlord, and Lord Lonsdale as the patron of forty livings, have become impossible. They must be seriously dealt with."[20] Yet Arnold was really unaware of the realities of the situation in 1886, when Gladstone's third Government was in power for a few months. He understood neither the insight with which Gladstone had gauged the strength of the demand for Home Rule, nor the true nature of the hostility felt by the Conservatives and many Liberals. "At the outset," says Hammond of this period, "a powerful party committed itself to two views; one, that any kind of Home Rule would break up the Empire; the other, that the Irish were unfit for self-government."[21] In the face of a temper like this even adequate reforms in local self-government were impossible. Arnold shared the first view, but he did not consider the second, whether justified or not, a valid ground for refusing to the Irish the maximum amount of local control short of national legislative independence.

Ironically, the prophet of culture in this instance was attacking the statesman who showed true prophetic insight. The man who insisted always on the large ground and the long-range view failed to see that these were the inspiration and justification of Gladstone's policy. From a reading of memoirs and biographies of prominent statesmen we gain both the knowledge that some form of self-government for Ireland was inevitable, and the impression that had Gladstone won the subsequent history of

[19] *Ibid.*, XV, 284.

[20] *Ibid.*, 229. Lord Clanricarde appears in the biographies of Balfour and of Harcourt as the worst type of "bad landlord," a perpetual absentee whose practice was "too much for the principle of freedom of contract" and lacked all "humanity and justice." See A. G. Gardiner, *Life of Sir William Harcourt* (London, 1923), II, 64.

[21] Hammond, *Gladstone and the Irish Nation*, 468.

Anglo-Irish relations might have been different. Perhaps, as Birrell says, "it is useless to discuss whether Gladstone's Home Rule Bill could have saved the Irish Connexion," since "probably nothing short of a republic could ultimately satisfy Ireland."[22] Yet the speculations on what might have been are general, and irresistible. Even an Irish historian, describing the period of Redmond's leadership, allows the "unsafe" speculation of "those who believe that a timely grant of the subordinate Parliament which he demanded would have rendered the Irish people proud citizens of the Empire and loyal subjects of the Crown."[23]

The movement towards self-government, if not the form it would take, was however as inevitable as the flowing of a tide. We expect to find recognition of this in the career and speeches of Asquith, who carried on the tradition and practice of Gladstonian Liberalism. What is more striking is the recognition of the inevitable among reluctant supporters and unyielding opponents of Home Rule. In 1882 and 1883 the brilliant parliamentarian Harcourt supported a Crimes bill and opposed both the Arrears bill and a bill to introduce a measure of local government in Ireland. As early as 1884 the facts of the Irish situation caused him to write gloomily to Lord Spencer: "It is idle to conceal from ourselves that we do and only can hold the country by force. I am afraid the *via media* of conciliation is impossible—there is no alternative between *separation* and coercion."[24] By 1885 he was taking Gladstone's side against the dissenting Hartington, and insisting that coercion had become physically and morally impossible. And in 1886, on the eve of Gladstone's downfall, he defended the principle of Home Rule in a statesmanlike and prophetic speech, pouring scorn on the "twenty years of resolute government" proposed by Lord Salisbury, and exposing the disruptive manœuvres of the then "Radical" Chamberlain.

Ignoring the last-minute surrender to facts of such violent and coercive Tories as Birkenhead (né Smith), we may find even more convincing than Harcourt's partly strategic shift the cool and logical progress in the views of the philosophical Conservative Balfour. He saw agrarian discontent as the root of Ireland's troubles and set up a Land Purchase bill and a Congested Districts Board, both far-reaching in their effect, but not until he had brought order to Ireland by four years of a Crimes Act which earned him the title of "Bloody Balfour." Yet though on his retirement in 1906 Irish affairs seemed to justify his policy of discipline and concession, the evidence of growing nationalism in Ireland moved him to make the following speech in 1911.

> If this be, as I am sure it is, an attempt of a certain section of the population of Ireland to work on a purely national basis, and to have in their Parliament and their Government a centre round which national feelings are to crystallize, it cannot remain dependent. . . . When Mr. Parnell said, "No man can put a limit to the march of a nation," he spoke words of statesmanlike wisdom. And if Ireland is really the nation which that sentence

[22]Birrell, *Gladstone*, 81. [23]Macardle, *The Irish Republic*, 61.
[24]Gardiner, *Life of Sir William Harcourt*, I, 505.

assumed, then no man could put a limit to its march, and certainly the paper limitations of your Act of Parliament are as powerless to stop the development of the separatist and Nationalist feeling as a child's sand castle to stop the advance of the sea.[25]

This cool posing of alternatives, with no appeal to "Ulster" emotions, by a man who himself "stood for the Union Parliament," was repeated in 1922, when Balfour "refused to consider any compromise between the maintenance of the Union and complete autonomy for Southern Ireland." With this capacity to lift issues above the merely parliamentary level, with his equable temperament, his intellectual interests and cultural equipment, and his rigorous and to many almost inhuman enforcing of order as a prerequisite to concession, it might not be fanciful to see in Balfour Arnold's ideal statesman.

Arnold's stand on the whole question was based on a combination of reason and prejudice. Several points have already been noticed—his opinion of Gladstone as a clever but dangerous politician, his conviction that order should precede reform, his dislike of concessions yielded to threats, and his belief that an independent Ireland would not only fail to control her own destinies serenely but would also constitute a menace to the security of England and the Empire. A contributing factor was his sympathy for his brother-in-law, W. E. Forster, who was a member of Gladstone's first and second ministries, and Chief Secretary for Ireland during 1880-2. Forster felt deeply about the Irish land question. He wrote to Gladstone, before the latter had advanced to so liberal a position, that the tenant had a right of continuous occupation at a rent not exorbitant, a right "from his history and especially from the fact that he had as a rule given the land what facilities for cultivation it possesses,"[26] a right which should be explicitly recognized by law. Yet he was against Home Rule from the beginning, and declared that the feeling for it in Ireland would die down with the redress of grievances. This meant that his earlier services as an accelerator on Gladstonian Irish policy were offset during the most critical period by his functioning as a brake. His strong preference for the "order first" program led him into violent Coercion bills and more violent anti-Parnell speeches. The "vicious circle" aspect of Anglo-Irish relations is perfectly exemplified during Forster's Secretaryship. Irish outrage increased and Forster retaliated by a record number of imprisonments, yet all the while he was wearing himself out in a supreme effort to carry out the "double task of reforming the law and reforming Dublin Castle."[27] Exhausted and disillusioned, he resigned from the Cabinet in protest against the release of Parnell in 1882, and from then till his death in April, 1886, threw his weight on the side of the anti-Home Rule faction.

The parallels, and I think it is safe to say the mutual influence, are obvious. Writing to his sister in 1881 Arnold said: "I do indeed feel for you in the present condition of things in Ireland—the more so as a beginning

[25] Dugdale, *Arthur James Balfour* (London, 1936), II, 340.
[26] Quoted by Hammond, *Gladstone and the Irish Nation*, 188.
[27] *Ibid.*, 285.

of the better state of things is all that we shall probably be permitted to see in our times; but it will be something solid to look back upon if William has been instrumental in forwarding even this beginning."[28] Both sympathy and personal admiration, and a respect (which was general) for Forster's talents, are blended in a letter to C. E. Norton in 1886. "It was tragic for a man who so keenly felt the satisfaction of political influence to die just at the moment when the certainty of it presented itself. Whether he who is gone or any of those who remain had or have power to extricate us from our present difficulties and dangers is another question. I suppose things looked even worse for us at the end of the last century, but to my eye they look extremely bad now."[29] Personal relations and similarity of outlook with Forster combined then with a sense of tragic loss to emphasize Arnold's hostility to the Gladstonian Liberalism which he thought had brought England to the verge of a political precipice. The articles and letters of 1886-7 concerning the government are closer to political polemic than anything else Arnold wrote, though never is the larger view or the desire for redress in Ireland lost sight of in the dislike for Home Rule.

The most representative of this group of four articles and two letters is the article entitled "The Nadir of Liberalism" which appeared in the *Nineteenth Century* for May, 1886. The strictures on Liberal foreign and domestic policy made twenty years before are given fresh point by contrast with the new Prussia, and Gladstone is compared with Bismarck to the detriment of the former. He has not succeeded, Arnold claims, he has merely made victories for his party—the fact that Irish Church Disestablishment and Land Acts have failed to pacify the Irish proves this. He is not to be blamed. His great talents are those not of a statesman but of a great parliamentary manager. His "perception and criticism of modern tendencies is fantastic and unsound," like his Homeric and biblical criticism. (With true Liberal fatuity, he is going to give the Irish autonomy just because they desire it![30]) And here Arnold offers as analogy the United States, where the presence of a separate Congress in the South would be a "perpetual stimulus to secession." Instead there is full local control, but one central Congress at Washington. Let Ireland have provincial legis-

[28] *Works*, XV, 98.

[29] *Ibid.*, 272. Nearly all the prominent Liberals were on his side and against Gladstone. We must note, too, that in 1875 Forster was considered as a possible leader of the Liberal party.

[30] Birrell gives us rather a different interpretation of Gladstone, quarrelling with the Radical Chamberlain and the Whig Hartington, and appealing over their heads to the country. "He would be in no sense of the word a party man. Gladstone took a long time to reach his opinions, but, having reached them, he understood their implications. It is this which differentiates him from almost all politicians. In 1885 the Irish agricultural labourer, that is to say, the Irish democracy, had voted for the first time. The vote was a crushing, almost unanimous, appeal for Home Rule. The metaphysician in Gladstone could argue from the general to the particular. If the Irish wanted Home Rule, they must have it." (*Gladstone*, 118.)

latures. The other proposal even invites civil war, since Ulster would not accept the dictates of a lower civilization without a struggle, or the removal of Protestant ascendancy in Ireland. Gladstone, with all his abilities, shows in his proposal his lack of both insight and foresight.[31]

On the other hand, Arnold goes on, "if Conservative action is blind we are undone." The pressing need is to defeat the Liberals, but it is just as important that the Conservatives rise above their prejudiced and selfish wishes, which are "to secure the Irish landowners and to prevent the scandal and peril of Catholic supremacy in Ireland."[32] They must rise to the level of Burke, and realize that landlord-tenant relations in Ireland have *not* been those of England; and that the time is ripe for "a complete and rational system of local government for these islands." That reasonable Liberals and Conservatives can co-operate to such an end is surely not a forlorn hope, Arnold concludes, and calls the characteristic and oft-quoted virtues of the English people to witness.

The two letters to *The Times* are in the same vein. By analogy with the Southern States and Scotland, Ireland needs not separate nationhood but "the just and due control of her own affairs."[33] Salisbury's talk of coercion is as bad as Gladstone's Home Rule. Aristocracies, Arnold agrees with Labouchere, are poor guides in politics. But political Dissenters and Radical workmen are not even as good because of their fetishes. It must have puzzled many of Arnold's readers to find him concluding that "it is on the country as a whole, and on the mind of the country, that we must rely!" In the second letter,[34] when the Salisbury Unionist ministry of 1886-92 has taken office, Arnold urges again the need of local legislative machinery for both Ireland and Great Britain. A comment on the American attitude reveals the criterion that is always operating in Arnold's mind, and explains the conclusion of the first letter, already quoted.[35] "Even here, if you weigh opinions instead of counting them, the balance of opinion is against Mr. Gladstone's Irish policy. High intelligence and wide knowledge are rare everywhere; they are rare in America." In speaking of the most recent outrages, Arnold practises the tolerance and balance

[31]From the time of Randolph Churchill's about-face in 1886, when he ended his strange interlude as a suitor for the Parnellite vote and became the "hot gospeller of Orange ascendancy," political opportunism has made the most of intransigent Orangism by recurrent appeals to pride and prejudice. With Churchill it was: "Ulster will fight and Ulster will be right." With Bonar Law in 1912, addressing a parade of Ulstermen in Belfast, it was: "You hold the pass, the pass for the Empire." And when Bonar Law and Birkenhead in the same year called upon Ulster, and upon English sympathizers, to revolt should Asquith's third Home Rule bill become law, the Prime Minister condemned the speech of the former as "furnishing forth the complete grammar of anarchy." Yet he was helpless against these virtual incitements to civil war. See report of speeches in Macardle, *The Irish Republic*, 88-93.

[32]"The Nadir of Liberalism" (*Nineteenth Century*, XIX, 1886, 659).

[33]"The Political Crisis" (*The Times*, May 22, 1886).

[34]"After the Elections" (*The Times*, Aug. 6, 1886).

[35]The second letter was written from the United States during his second visit.

he has always preached. "What they do is often most evil and dangerous but I consider the provocation they have received. To have Parliament treating the local affairs of Ireland as the Irish minority or the British Philistine desire, and then to be told that Ireland is on the same footing as England and Scotland! It needs an Irishman of Burke's calibre to be reasonable under the circumstances." The character and bent of Irishmen would make a national Parliament extremely risky, Arnold feels, but local self-government has two additional arguments besides those already listed. First, Continental and American opinion considers it long overdue: secondly, British opinion is ready for it. And here we may detect an example of the way in which the criteria employed in Arnold's literary criticism passed easily into his social and political criticism.

The other articles may be touched on briefly. "The Zenith of Conservatism" is a lecture to the triumphant Conservatives on their duty with respect to the various problems facing them, of which the Irish problem is really the one which will test their capacity either to remain at the zenith or to stage a dismal collapse. Anarchy and outrage must be severely put down, but the wrongs, particularly with respect to the land, must be immediately redressed. This done, Arnold believes his countrymen may look forward with equanimity to Conservative rule until the "Liberals of the future" emerge. Six months later Arnold's anxiety lest the Home Rule party should return is reflected in the sharper tone of his article "Up to Easter,"[36] in which he upbraids the Conservatives with having neither quelled the anarchy nor shown any intention of passing immediate remedial measures. The larger proportion of this article is given to the need for restoring order; the final article, "From Easter to August," is a protest against punitive measures alone. The Conservatives, Arnold declares, are no longer at the zenith. Their Crimes Act was needed, and its rigorous discipline, but now "healing measures" are needed even more. They have weakened Home Rule, but, and here is the reason for Arnold's earnest and prolonged pleading, such selfish neglect of Irish wrongs will sweep the Liberals into office again, and Home Rule will become a fact. His anxiety leads Arnold to speak with more acrimony than usual of Gladstone, who becomes "a stump orator," whose "powers of self-deception are so inexhaustible that he is never insincere." This recalls the acid comment in the "Zenith" article on Gladstone's appeal to Hartington for co-operation, unfortunately rebuffed. Arnold invokes *Rasselas* to meet the situation: "His old instructor officiously sought opportunities of conference, which the prince, having long considered him as one whose intellects were exhausted, was not very willing to afford."[37]

[36] *Nineteenth Century*, XXI, 1887, 629.

[37] The connotations of Liberal (and liberal) for the self-styled "Liberal of the future" become something of a mystery when we find him exalting the politician who not only led the recalcitrant Whigs against Gladstone, but also was at times indistinguishable in point of view from the Tory opposition.

The nature of Arnold's opposition to Gladstone and the reasons for it have been indicated at some length. His estimate of Gladstone is far from the considered verdict of posterity. In fact, J. L. Hammond, in his authoritative and thoroughly documented study of Gladstone and Ireland, demonstrates that the great Liberal leader not only possessed in a unique degree the "insight and foresight" respecting the Irish problem which Arnold denied him, but in one way at least exemplified the ultimate in statesmanship.

> None of his speeches were addressed to the self-interest or the self-pride of his audiences. [The listener was made to feel] that he was contributing to the moral judgment of the world on great events. . . . He stands or sits in a vast audience, not a miner or a boilermaker brooding over the hardships of his life, but a classless man whose mind is playing freely, able to give a disinterested study to a great issue. To make a man in this sense a God is an object of all great art and Gladstone never lost this power.[38]

Borne out by the tribute of unbiased contemporaries, this verdict reveals the quality that Arnold should have been the first to recognize and admire.

With the successive moves to independence of De Valera's government fresh in our memory, culminating as they did in the declaration of Irish neutrality in 1939 and the refusal of Irish harbour facilities to the Royal

[38]Hammond, *Gladstone and the Irish Nation*, 706. Perhaps nowhere are the qualities Hammond refers to better illustrated than in Gladstone's closing speech in the debate on the second reading of the Home Rule bill, on June 8, 1886. "Ireland stands at your bar, expectant, hopeful, almost suppliant. Her words are the words of truth and soberness. She asks a blessed oblivion of the past, and in that oblivion our interest is deeper than even hers. My right hon. friend [Mr. Goschen] asks us to-night to abide by the traditions of which we are the heirs. What traditions? By the Irish traditions? Go into the length and breadth of the world, ransack the literature of all the countries; find, if you can, a single voice, a single book—find, I would almost say, as much as a single newspaper article, unless the product of the day, in which the conduct of England towards Ireland is anywhere treated except with profound and bitter condemnation. Are these the traditions to which we are exhorted to stand? No, they are a sad exception to the glory of our country. They are a broad and black blot upon the pages of its history, and what we want to do is to stand by the traditions of which we are the heirs, in all matters except our relations to Ireland, and to make our relations to Ireland conform to the other traditions of our country. So I hail the demand of Ireland for what I call a blessed oblivion of the past. She asks also a boon for the future; and that boon for the future, unless we are much mistaken, will be a boon to us in respect of honour no less than a boon to her in respect of happiness, prosperity and peace. Such, Sir, is her prayer." Quoted in Asquith, *Fifty Years of Parliament* (London, 1926), I, 146-7.

An equally eloquent utterance (and strangely Arnoldian in tone and temper, if not entirely in substance) is that of Asquith, when speaking on the "Black-and-Tan" activities and Sinn Fein reprisals. Since recapture and force are contrary to the "will and conscience of British people," what is the alternative to full Dominion Home Rule for Ireland? He proposes two conditions to be satisfied: "The first is that the Irish people should be made to believe that, so far as Great Britain is concerned, what is offered comes from an honest, and also from a responsible source. The second is that, after making all necessary allowances for . . . a genuine local minority, it should meet and satisfy Irish aspirations." And he concludes: "I am not alarmed by the spectre of an Irish Republic. Men do not in the long run fight for phrases, but for realities." See Asquith, *Memories and Reflections* (London, 1928), II, 191-2.

Navy, we can easily assess today the true far-sightedness of Gladstone's Irish policy, even though its probable outcome remains a matter of speculation.[39] But in rejecting Arnold's view of him we must remember the reasons for that view, and the fact that Arnold's strictures were mild indeed compared to opinions formed by most of Gladstone's prominent contemporaries, including many of his colleagues. We must also remember that Arnold's diagnosis in the case of Ireland was sound, and resulted from an application of his general principles to a concrete example. His dislike for Home Rule obscured the lengths to which he was prepared to go with remedial measures—much further in some ways than the politically limited and harassed Gladstone. And this dislike is partially explained by his conviction that the granting of Home Rule would be a mere yielding to force and clamour, and his fear that both Ireland and the Empire would suffer. Certainly the theory that order and calm are essential to sound reform is at least an arguable case, and it must be coupled with Arnold's repeated warning that last-minute, grudging, or inadequate concessions, which had failed to reconcile a subject people to their rulers, would not make of them loyal and co-operative fellow-citizens. One more comment may be added. Long before Gladstone was alive to the real importance of the Irish problem,[40] at a time when only isolated political voices were heard on Ireland's behalf, Matthew Arnold was using the Irish stick to beat the British Philistine, and indicating the source of Irish religious, social, and political grievances as clearly though not so persistently as he was to do nearly twenty years later.

[39]The shades of Balfour and Asquith must have exchanged quizzical glances at a recent utterance of De Valera, after he had "emphatically proclaimed his allegiance to the British Commonwealth" and defended himself against criticisms from his party that the Republican status of Eire was not being suitably demonstrated. "We have a Republic here in association with the Commonwealth. That association has practical values for us. We have always had close race ties with the Commonwealth and free association offers unity here and the prospect of the ultimate unity of all Ireland." Quoted in Reuter's despatch for Oct. 9, 1946.

[40]Gladstone, indeed, admitted in 1888 that Forster in 1880 had preceded him in his thorough grasp of the formidable nature of the Irish problem. And it is safe to assume that Forster's awareness and attitude reflected to some degree the influence of his brother-in-law.

# AUSTRALIAN LABOUR TODAY

LLOYD ROSS

IN April, 1934, the QUARTERLY published an article by me entitled "The Depression in Australia." The depression was ending. Australian Labour had failed either to achieve a democratic and socialist alternative to deflation or to hold the support of the electorate. The Scullin Labour Government, elected in 1929, was defeated in 1931, after a series of party splits that left Labour out of office in New South Wales until May, 1941, and in the Commonwealth until October, 1941.

Today, having faced another crisis, the test of war, Australian Labour is more successful politically and more united structurally than ever before in its history. Four of the six states have Labour Governments. The Commonwealth Labour Government was endorsed by the electorate in 1943 and 1946. Never before had a Commonwealth Labour Government been returned by the electorate after having held a term of office. The present position of parties in the Australian Parliament is as follows:

*Senate*

| | |
|---|---|
| Labour | 33 |
| Non-Labour | 3 |

*House of Representatives*

| | |
|---|---|
| Labour | 43 |
| Anti-Labour | 29 |
| Independent Labour | 2 |

Labour had a past to outlive. Not merely had the experiences during the First World War and depression created a view that the party could not be trusted to govern in difficult times, but they had left behind divisions and bitterness in New South Wales, the largest state, that prevented a Labour victory in the Commonwealth. It was not until W. J. McKell (now Governor-General) was elected Premier of New South Wales in May, 1941, that the public was convinced Labour should be given another opportunity to govern. Labour's greatest political triumph paradoxically occurred in a war during which Labour reversed its previous policies and ignored its strongest traditions. In the First World War the Labour movement opposed conscription for service overseas, expelled political leaders, including Prime Minister Hughes, who supported conscription, and made anti-conscriptionism the first principle of its platform even though that led to overwhelming defeats in elections. One of the prominent leaders in the anti-conscription campaign was John Curtin, who as Prime Minister in the Second World War forced through his party and Parliament an act which extended compulsion for home defence to conscription for services fighting in a limited overseas area. Man-power controls were introduced, wages pegged, striking unions threatened with discipline by a Labour Government. But Labour was John Curtin. While Curtin's policy could

be reconciled with some factors in the general story of Labour, Curtin himself was indispensable in evolving the triumph of qualities and developing policies that led Labour not merely to victory, but to victory as a united party.

In the circumstances of Australia, at the time, the unity of Labour was as vital to the successful prosecution of the war as the formation of a National Government elsewhere, but there were factors which made this so difficult as to be almost a miracle in Labour history.

The Labour party, formed in 1891 from miscellaneous groups and individuals,[1] had been held together by the trade unions, numerically and politically as powerful as unionism in any part of the world. There developed slowly in each of the six Australian states and in the Commonwealth central union councils and central Labour parties. Only in West Australia are unions and political leagues combined in the same organization, so that elsewhere the differences which develop inevitably between the trade unions and politicians, were accentuated by the existence of separate organizations. Communists are not permitted to join the Labour party, but they are not excluded from any union and they are officials of key unions. Through their membership in unions, affiliated with the Labour party, they are able to exercise an influence over the policy of the Labour party. These sources of division inside the Labour party and of difficulties for a Labour Government, are mentioned in order to illustrate both the permanent problem confronting Labour, and the extent of Curtin's achievement in holding together the diverse elements that make up the Australian Labour party.

## I

Economic conditions were improving in the period between the wars; social progress was lagging behind national prosperity. The national income was again rising—from as low as £768,000,000 in 1928-9, back to £528,000,000 in 1931-2, and finally up to £814,000,000 in 1937-8.[2] Real income per head rose slightly. The volume of manufacturing, efficiency in production, and the output per person were increasing. Exports rose from A£118,000,000 in 1931-2 to A£160,000,000 in 1936-7. Imports rose from A£57,000,000 in 1931-2 to A£143,000,000 in 1937-8. Wheat production in 1932-3 was a record crop of 214,000,000 bushels. Wool was the principal item among the exports, and wool prices were rising. The total amount spent on new buildings in the largest city, Sydney, in 1934 was £3,112,278, an increase of £897,775 over 1933. Freight tonnage on the railways in New South Wales improved from 4,568,000 tons for the first five months of the 1933-4 financial year to 5,260,000 tons for the corresponding months of 1934-5, an increase for five months of 692,000 tons. Expansion of the Australian iron and steel industry made these advances possible. In

[1] See my article "The Philosophy of Australian Labor" (*Antioch Review*, Spring, 1947).
[2] A. G. L. Shaw, *The Economic Development of Australia* (Melbourne, 1944).

1928-9 Australian production of pig iron was 461,000 tons, of steel ingots 433,000, and of steel rails 354,000 tons; in 1938-9 the results were over 1,100,000 tons of both pig iron and steel ingots, and nearly 1,000,000 tons of rails.

In 1934 the Commonwealth Arbitration Court decided to restore the 10 per cent cut in wages made during the depression. A change in the basis of wages meant, however, that few workers obtained any advantage from the restoration of the cut. Labour was indignant, but powerless. Agitation for a forty-hour week took the place of strike action. Only in 1937, when a prosperity loading of five to six shillings was added to the basic wage, was any attempt made by the federal Arbitration Court to give a substantial raise to the mass of workers and to restore their confidence in the Court, which was still subject to the hostility and suspicion that were a product of the depression years. Little attention was paid by psychologists or economists to the problems of industrial relations, which were accumulating difficulties throughout the whole of the period between the wars, but which did not become explosive until the end of the Second World War. The anti-Labour Governments were still dominated by the depression outlooks, which had been acquiesced in by the public when Labour, in its turn, had apparently failed to stop the drift through the depression. Grievances of unionists accumulated. Unions, weakened during the depression, stored up their anger and sullenly waited. Much of the present industrial discontent has its origin, not in the restraints enforced on unions during the war, but in the failure before the war to solve problems of malnutrition, slum housing conditions, and social neglect.

## II

Thought had not recovered its freedom from the restrictions of the First World War, when the depression frightened reactionary politicians into continuing the limitations on freedom of expression into the between-wars period. Among the films banned in Australia were "Ten Days That Shook the World," "Non-Intervention," and "The Bombing of Canton." The Russian film, "The Five Year Plan," was banned by the Acting Minister for Trade and Customs, on the grounds that it was merely a form of Soviet propaganda.

The most amazing and sinister prohibition of a play occurred when the Chief Secretary of New South Wales stopped the production of "Till the Day I Die" by Clifford Odets, following intervention by the German Consul. On December 21, 1938, without any warning the Labour wireless station 2KY had its license withdrawn on the decision of the Postmaster-General. An attempt was made to stop the entry of Czechoslovakian Egon Kisch into Australia. Daily newspapers treated this incident with lofty contempt, gave facetious reports of meetings addressed by Kisch, ignored the issue of intellectual freedom in their editorials, and refused to publish letters in protest, including one signed by a number of university

lecturers. The Labour Council of New South Wales set up a Committee for the Defence of Democratic Rights which had been suggested by the Communist party. In October, 1938, H. Devanny was charged with "soliciting funds for an unlawful association," namely, the Communist party. This charge failed. Then under the powers conferred on it by a Crimes Act, the Government proceeded to refuse working-class papers, journals, and pamphlets the right of transmission through the post, on the grounds that they were published by "unlawful associations." *Soviets To-day*, the journal of the Friends of the Soviet Union, the *Workers' Weekly*, organ of the Communist party, the *Bushworker*, published by the Pastoral Workers' Union, as well as a whole series of other publications, were banned. The next step came in 1935, when the Communist party and the Friends of the Soviet Union were summoned to appear before the High Court on October 2 to show cause why they should not be declared unlawful associations. It was this last action which led the Communist party to organize liberals and trade unionists into a democratic movement with the task of promoting (1) the cessation of the attacks on the Communist party and the Friends of the Soviet Union; (2) the repeal of all anti-working class legislation on the statute books. The co-operation between Communists, Liberals, and Left Labourites was strongest during this period—as it is at its weakest now. Under the pretext that war was developing, and as an indirect result of political stagnation, the Government used its resources to prevent discussion on the international situation. New amendments to the Crimes Act were placed before the Senate on October 1, 1935. Section (Ia) read:

> Any person who publishes any book, periodical, pamphlet, handbill, poster or newspaper containing any matter of such a nature as to, or as to be likely to—
>
> (*a*) seduce any person serving in the King's Forces from his duty and allegiance; or
>
> (*b*) incite any person serving in the King's Forces to commit an act of mutiny, or any traitorous or mutinous act; or
>
> (*c*) incite any person serving in the King's Forces to make or endeavour to make a mutinous assembly,
>
> shall be guilty of an indictable offence.
>
> *Penalty:* Five hundred pounds or imprisonment for two years.

The Book Censorship Abolition League in Melbourne was given the right to peruse the list of banned books, but was prevented from taking any notes. It was, however, discovered that before December, 1933, 66 books had been placed on a "consolidated" list of prohibited seditious works; between December, 1933, and October, 1934, 74 books and publications were added; between October, 1934, and January, 1935, 12 more were added. Included in the list were books by Lenin and Stalin.

In 1938 the Melbourne City Council refused to let the Melbourne Town Hall to the Victorian Branch of the League of Nations Union for a meeting to discuss the implications for British, and therefore Australian, foreign policy, of the resignation of the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs (Mr. Eden). The Minister for Defence (Mr. Thorby), in a public statement, urged citizens to refrain from using press, platform, or broadcasting facilities

for the purpose of giving their opinions on the nation's foreign policy. A little later the City Councils of Sydney, Melbourne, and Brisbane, or their officers, refused to make available halls for a broadcast by an American, Mr. Rutherford, a leader of the religious sect of the Witnesses for Jehovah. Then the radio script of Judge Fostor, a leading Labour and liberal thinker, was censored by the Australian Broadcasting Commission.

The nation was too paralysed in mind to realize the issues that were involved in these conflicts over freedom. Australia had since the war done little to inspire the enthusiasm of its youth or the admiration of visitors. The consequences of the depression on the spirit of the people lingered after the economic consequences were disappearing. The nation had not fully recovered its morale when the issues arising from the coming war threw new confusions into the thoughts of Australians. The Right, realizing the political advantages that traditionally had come to them from war preparations, were unable to adjust their actions to a situation in which they would be aligned with progressive forces, whom they feared, against the Fascists, whom they admired. To support Spain was a difficulty for Australian conservatives since the campaign in Australia on behalf of the Spanish nationalists was being organized by "left" socialists and Communists. To advocate defence preparations during a war whose origin was "progressive," meant, however, that their intentions were frequently distorted, and their activities twisted in the direction of suppressing those people who were taking the lead in opposition to fascism. Fortunate for the Right though weakening to the popular campaigns against war and fascism, was the confusion which confronted Labour as well as its opponents. Labour was a movement containing pacifists, isolationists, and internationalists, Catholics, secularists, and socialists, supporters of Franco, enthusiasts for the Spanish Government, and anti-imperialists who desired to retain the neutrality of the workers in the coming war. Every opinion and every variety of opinion was expressed by some group or union or party official. Ideas and decisions worked out before the development of events were repudiated when the time had arisen for application. Said a speaker at an important trade union conference, opposing the use of sanctions against Italy on behalf of Abyssinia: "We don't want any sanctions; what we should do is close the Suez Canal and stop the war." Left Labour boycotted Japanese goods, and met with opposition from political leaders; trade unions banned the export of pig iron to Japan and were denounced by Labour.

But the views of the Communists and of the Left inside the Labour party were no more consistent and clear than those of the Labour Right, although it was not until the coming of the war, which cleansed the Labour Right and the Labour Centre of their ambiguities and confusion, that the impossible position of the Soviet-inspired Left was revealed fully. The Left resisted all war preparations, but supported collective security; fought the war plans of the Menzies anti-Labour Government on the grounds that the

Government wanted "war"—against Hitler, which the Left was advocating! The Labour Left followed the policies of Soviet Russia; the Right demanded neutrality and supported isolationist policies; the Centre opposed a policy of collective security, and tried to refrain from judging international issues until the war developed; and continuously fluctuating between these three summarized policies was the mass of Labour voters and supporters.

## III

Depressed in politics and outlook, the Labour movement needed a policy and a leadership that would re-win confidence in itself and in the people. The self-generating process that creates interest at election times, gave a pretence of activity that the political results showed to be unsatisfactory and mechanical. The daily business of trade unionism continued the routine practice of collecting dues and putting up complaints to the employers on arbitration courts; the compulsory Arbitration Court sat. Superficially there seemed no reason why anyone should complain—except that Labour could not win important elections. But time was on Labour's side, for no anti-Labour Government could hold office forever. Neither would Labour in its turn. More trust was put in the swing of the pendulum than in the power of principles to win the people. The party survived—what else mattered, even though the German Social Democratic party and the German trade unions showed all the same signs of strength, up to the day they were smashed by Hitler! However that might be, Australian trade unionism did revive in numbers and strength from the losses of the depression period.

| | 1932 | 1933 | 1934 | 1935 | 1936 | 1937 | 1938 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| *Unionism* | | | | | | | |
| No. of unions | 361 | 356 | 355 | 354 | 356 | 358 | 366 |
| Unionists | 740,831 | 739,398 | 762,567 | 790,830 | 814,809 | 856,283 | 885,158 |
| Percentage increase | | | | 3.7 | 3.0 | 4.8 | 3.3 |
| Percentage to total earners | | | | | | | |
| Men | | | | 46.2 | 47.2 | 49.0 | 50.3 |
| Women | | | | 32.9 | 32.4 | 33.5 | 32.8 |
| Persons | | | | 43.4 | 44.1 | 45.7 | 46.6 |
| *Disputes* | | | | | | | |
| Number | | | | 183 | 235 | 342 | 376 |
| Work-people involved | | | | 47,322 | 60,587 | 96,173 | 143,954 |
| Days lost | | | | 495,124 | 497,248 | 557,111 | 1,337,994 |

In my 1934 article I argued that the Australian community despite the experiences of the depression had not altered its views on the importance of state intervention in economic development or the necessity for social reform being continuous. Anti-Labour Governments were slow to recognize that basic Australian trends were again operating and that the

people were seeking higher standards of living; they introduced scattered reforms, but the drift of public opinion was towards the bigger plans promised by Labour.

The historical irony of developments was that it needed experiences in a war to place the Labour party deeply in the confidence of the electorate. In 1940 Labour was in a minority of two votes in the House of Representatives; in 1943 it won a majority.

The change was as great as it was surprising. John Curtin, who had succeeded J. Scullin (Prime Minister, 1929-31) as leader of the party in 1935, worked tirelessly to rebuild the party, expended energy in by-elections, drove himself to conquer his own doubts about Labour's ability to govern during the coming war crisis. An anti-war socialist in the First World War, and an opponent of the party's policies in the depression, he was haunted by the fear that it was the destiny of Labour in crises to be given power, only to fail, not because the party's principles were wrong, but because the movement could not discipline itself behind the loyalty to its leadership. Though he had been one of Scullin's harshest critics during the depression, he had not accustomed himself to party jealousies, suspicions, and intrigues, which worried him to his death in 1945. Much was to happen during the decade that he led the Labour party.

At present any judgment of Curtin must be purely tentative, but since he provides a remarkably accurate personification of the Labour movement itself, we may use his development as a summary-guide for the years ahead. An internationalist, he became a war leader, partly because his nation was threatened with destruction, mainly because his party could survive only in a nation. In the progress of his thinking Party and Nation were becoming a synthesis for his social and political ideas. A socialist, he resisted the attempts of the Communists to lead Australia into the Russian sphere of influence, even though the interests of the workers seemed to demand a policy of collective security against war. Enough of an anti-imperialist to look with suspicion on the use of sanctions against Italy on behalf of British interests in Egypt, he was not internationalist enough to involve Australia in a stand against Hitler's plans in Europe. Uncertain amidst events that in all parts of the world were dividing the Labour movement, he preferred to wait, to stand isolated, to keep Australia out of foreign struggles, especially as every new issue made more difficult the task of achieving Labour unity, the task which he set himself to perform. He endeavoured to hold the fragments together, to attract them around the magnet of the federal party, to win by-elections, to campaign relentlessly for Labour political victories, and to be patient with Langism in New South Wales. In brief he sought to rebuild Labour as a step in reviving the Australian nation.

These aims he achieved. To him, until 1939, doctrines on foreign affairs were not as important as achieving the unity and victory of the Labour party. There would be a time for working out Labour principles

when a united party achieved office. So the appeal in his speeches was the direct primitive Labour demand for improved living conditions on behalf of the Australian masses. In a paper read before the Adelaide meeting of the Australian Institute of Political Science, "The Census and the Social Science State," he declared his support for expanding social services. The strongest impression created in the memories of those who met Curtin in that period was the sincerity of this hatred of poverty. His election booklet, *Labor's Challenge*, produced in 1937, gave a detailed attention to issues of nutrition, child endowment, housing, and national insurance.

> Today in Australia there are hundreds of thousands of human beings against whom an obvious and cruel injustice is being committed. In a land overflowing with all the resources for providing food and clothing, thousands of human beings are compelled to suffer from the humiliation of charity. Thousands of victims of the present system have been robbed, stripped of all that is best in life, and today are cast by the wayside. For them there is no future unless and until the workless are employed, and the standard of living raised.

And when, as Labour party and Opposition Leader for the first time, he delivered his policy speech in Freemantle on September 20, 1937, it was still the agitator talking; it was still the class division in society which he emphasized; it was still the Labour leader outlining the mistakes and failures of the Government.

During the months following the outbreak of war, Curtin hesitated to embarrass the war plans of the anti-Labour Governments, fought by-elections determinedly, demanded that a non-party War Council be established, refused to join a National Government, held back his extremist supporters in the House, and discouraged strikes outside. While he was thus in danger of losing the support of Left Labour in New South Wales and was meeting growing opposition in his own ranks, he was winning the confidence of two Independents, the key men in the House of Representatives, who were becoming increasingly worried at the drift in Australian administration. In October, 1941, they gave office to Curtin and Labour.

## IV

Four events altered completely the balance of Labour opinion in Australia towards the war. First, the Nazi attack on Scandinavia, on the Low Countries, France, and Great Britain brought together two important changes of thought—the realization that whatever may have been the desire of many "guilty men" in France and England, Hitler was determined to smash the power of Britain and France; and the recognition of the possibility that Britain might be invaded, and Australia become a prize in the peace negotiations. Secondly, the attack by Hitler on Russia towards the end of 1941 reversed Communist policy and removed theoretical barriers to a participation in an imperialist war. The third event, the threat to Australia from Japan, forced trade unions to see the need for changes if Australia was to be saved from invasion. Finally, the establishment of a

Labour Government in October, 1941, gave to the unions a feeling of confidence that the Labour Government would act as an insurance that war changes would not be used by Labour's enemies to lower standards unnecessarily and to weaken Labour power irretrievably.

The Government used as advisers and administrators those who had provided the recovery plans of the depression, which the Labour party of that day, including Curtin, had criticized fiercely. Professor Copland, as Commissioner of Prices, was one of Curtin's main advisers during the war and became Australian Minister to China. Professor Giblin, who had written a series of demagogic letters to John Smith supporting the anti-Labour proposals, was another important economic adviser. Academic economists who became increasingly influential included Professor Melville, Professor Wilson, Professor Mills, and especially Dr. H. C. Coombs. Of these only Dr. Coombs had been sympathetic to Labour.

Trade unionists were represented on many agencies, boards, and commissions, but the Government was either unwilling or unable to evoke ideas and assistance from the Labour party itself. Perhaps the most significant example of this limitation was the preparation of a White Paper on employment. Although this was a theoretical document, which should have been related to the party conference discussions by Labour on its own objectives, the document went the round of non-Labour economists and administrators without making any contact with the Labour movement. Labour conferences talked socialism; neither conferences nor Government felt the need or responsibility of relating the Government's theories of full employment and the party's objective of socialism.

The White Paper of May, 1945, a Keynesian document, may be thus summarized:

> One of the chief threats to full employment is the instability of private capital expenditure (expenditure by individuals and firms on machinery and plant, factories, houses, stocks of goods) and of expenditure from overseas. Public capital expenditure by Governments and local authorities (on such items as new railways, roads, bridges, buildings, land development, power and light, water conservation) is the principle type of expenditure that can be readily varied to offset variation in the unstable types of expenditure. In the past public capital expenditure has fluctuated considerably, Governments varying such expenditure in sympathy with private spending. When private spending contracted so did Government spending.
>
> This is the reverse of the policy that should be pursued. When employment tends to decline, resources can be usefully employed in improving the collective capital equipment of the country. The essential condition of full employment is that public expenditure should be high enough to stimulate private spending to the point where the two together provide a demand for the total production of which the economy is capable.

## V

It is not intended here to outline the steps which Australian Labour has taken to organize reconversion of the nation from war to peace, but to illustrate the general tendencies of Labour policy with three examples. These are the increase in social services, revealing the main reformist

method of Australian Labour, the establishment of a Coal Board, revealing an unwillingness to take direct steps to nationalization, and the changes in the control of the Commonwealth Bank, making possible the development of a theory that social control can be enforced by monetary action.

The expansion of social services is interesting, not merely as indicating the main direction of Labour's measures, but also the extent of the Commonwealth's participation in a field of social reform that had been mainly the field of the states. Income tax is now uniform throughout the Commonwealth, and the Commonwealth has the exclusive right to levy it, funds being remitted by the Commonwealth to the states. The Commonwealth Government attempted to fill the gaps left by the state schemes, and to introduce extensive and progressive schemes of social security. In 1946, the Minister for Post-War Reconstruction made the following assertion:

> Labor in opposition compelled the then Government to grant an increase to pensioners to 21/- per week, and after assuming office increased the rate on two occasions, and today pensioners may receive 32/6 a week. A married couple, both pensioners, can thus receive £3. 5. 0 in pensions and £2 from other sources—a total of £5. 5. 0 a week. Invalid pensions have been increased, and now those who are only 85 per cent incapacitated are eligible for this pension. The Labour Government has also provided a funeral benefit of £10 for old-age and invalid pensioners. To further assist people with young families, we have increased child endowment from 5/- to 7/6 a week. We abolished the "means test" for maternity allowance, extended the age of dependent children from 14 to 16 years and increased the payments from £4. 10. 0 to £15 where there are no previous living children under 16; from £5 to £16 where there are one or two such children; and from £7. 10. 0 to £17. 10. 0 where there are three or more such children. Under the provisions of the Pharmaceutical Benefits Act, free medicine would be provided as well as certain medical appliances. The Labour Government has provided free hospitalization in public wards of public hospitals, and £2. 2. 0 per week towards the cost of treatment in intermediate and private wards. The unemployment and sickness benefits provided by the Labour Government are social reforms that had been promised, but never provided, by anti-Labour Governments for over 25 years.

The expenditure on social services in 1939-40 was less than £17,000,000. In 1945-6 the Labour Government spent £50,000,000. In 1946-7 it will spend £70,000,000. A constitutional referendum held during the 1946 elections specified the Commonwealth power to legislate for social services, so that we may expect further developments. Already a scheme of superannuation for all citizens is being discussed.

The main black-coal resources are situated in New South Wales, but there are constitutional and financial limitations on a state nationalization scheme. The constitutional limitations have been overcome by joint effort and legislation of the Commonwealth and New South Wales. A joint Coal Board has been established, with all the powers necessary to ensure a regular production of coal to meet the needs of the Australian economy. It will consist of three members, appointed for seven years by arrangement between the state and the Commonwealth, who will not represent sectional interests in the industry, but will be selected because of their special

qualifications and capacities to carry out their wide functions. The Board is to ensure that coal is produced in the state in such quantities and with such regularity as will meet requirements throughout Australia and for trade with other countries; to ensure that the coal resources of the state are conserved and developed; to ensure that the coal produced is distributed and used in such manner, quantities, classes, and grades and at such prices as are calculated best to serve the public interest and secure its economical use; and finally to promote the welfare of workers engaged in the coal industry in the state.

Owing to doubts and limitations as to the extent of Commonwealth powers under the constitution, reliance will be placed on state authority for many of the major functions of the Board, such as the acquisition of coal mines. But there is no indication at the moment that this Board will base its policy on schemes of nationalization. The policy seems rather to be one of encouraging the miners to produce more coal by a programme of amenities without altering the basis of ownership.

The depression had left Labour with a strongly held view that monetary factors—some believed a conspiracy of financiers—were a major cause in producing unemployment, but that a Commonwealth Labour Government could by monetary action avoid the worst consequences of a depression. Consequently the Commonwealth Bank has been given power to determine the policy of private banks, as directed by the Treasurer of the day. Probably the most important example of the link between an "objective" of socialization and an "aim" of full employment is to be found in this Commonwealth Government's banking legislation. No industry is socialized; but financial power is vested in the government.

Australian Labour's preparations for conversion had been thought out carefully in the later years of the war. Demobilization was carried out smoothly and rapidly. The general demobilization of the Australian Defence Forces commenced on October 1, 1945, and terminated on February 15, 1947. Upon the cessation of hostilities on August 15, 1945, 595,750 men and women were serving with the three services. By February 15, 1947, 551,428 members (510,852 men and 40,576 women) had been demobilized and the services had been reduced to an interim strength of 60,133. Opportunities for re-establishment were generous and have been successful: training allowances to permit full-time training for employment, schemes of soldiers' land settlement and housing, loans and other aids for employers or self-employed, war gratuities, legal aid, and so on.

The general economic situation was recently summarized by the Prime Minister.[4]

**Wages and salaries earned in Australia last year were £200,000,000 higher than 1938-39. In July, 1938, civilian salary and wage earners totalled 2,061,000, but in 1946 the total**

[4]Mr. Chifley was supporting with facts a statement made by the Australian Ambassador in the United States (Mr. Makin) that Australia was going through an era of unparalleled prosperity.

had grown to 2,460,000, the highest on record. The trend was still upward. Wages and salaries paid in 1946 totalled £610,000,000 compared with £432,000,000 in 1938-39. While the average number employed increased by 5½ per cent, earnings increased by 41 per cent. Between 1920 and 1939 unemployment was never less than 7 per cent and it reached nearly 30 per cent during the depression. In July, 1939, the workless totalled 12½ per cent. In December, 1946, the percentage was only 2 per cent.

It is estimated that 3,034,000 persons were engaged in civil employment in Australia in June. This total is a record, being 296,000 above the 1939 level.

This article, then, ends on a note of triumph. Although during 1947 the Labour party lost control of the government in West Australia and failed to win in South Australia, elections in New South Wales and Queensland returned Labour to further periods of office, with only slightly reduced majorities. The programme of social reform continues with redoubled energy. The party is more united than ever before in its history; critics within are as unimportant as the influence of the Communist party without. Even industrial unrest, which has broken out in gusts against delays to raise wages, is declining. The central union organizations are prepared to discipline unions which cause strikes without their sanction. Wage increases have been granted and it is expected that a forty-hour week will shortly be granted. But Labour has been in a similar state of self-satisfaction before—never more so than before the development of unexpected crises. The weaknesses in the position are the continuation of industrial unrest, unemployment owing to the shortage of coal, the delay in the recovery of production which threatens the Government's anti-inflation policy, the slow progress of rehousing, the uncertainty of the world trade position, the declining interest in theoretical problems of government and political science, the deadly apathy of Labour towards its history and philosophy.

These issues will not produce immediate political defeats, but they are weaknesses that must be set against the strength, if we would give a rounded picture of Labour in Australia today.

# MOTIVATION AND CHARACTER PORTRAYAL IN *OTHELLO*

WILLIAM O. RAYMOND

WHATEVER may have been the limitations of pre-nineteenth-century criticism of Shakespeare as a poet and dramatist, it has paid fine tribute to the excellence of his plays as "a just and lively image of human nature," and to the reality of the characters depicted in them. At the same time, its estimate, judiciously, stopped short of Romantic extravagance. A by-product of the fervency of Romantic eulogy was the habit of discussing the characters of Shakespeare as though they were existent beings whose psychology must conform in every particular to the actualities of life. It would, however, be unjust to the aesthetic discernment of Coleridge to maintain that reality in dramatic representation was regarded by him as a photographic copy of life.

Yet the philosophically minded Coleridge in his idolatry of Shakespeare tended to place the men and women of his dramas in a psychological straitjacket of a still more arbitrary nature. As "ideal realities" created by the inspiration of a unique poetic genius, they were elevated almost to the height of divine prototypes. Shakespeare was endowed with an omniscience comparable to that of the guiding providence of history. Character drawing and motivation in his dramas approached the absoluteness of the fiat of Deity. Action and thought were controlled by an inexorable logic which postulated a flawless consistency and an unbroken sequence of cause and effect. Since Shakespeare in the essentials of his art was infallible, the men and women of his plays were in subjection to a principle of necessity more rigorous in some respects than that exhibited in life itself.

One of the achievements of modern criticism has been to discredit this fetish. Historical and aesthetic considerations have contributed to its overthrow. In the first place, interpretation of the characters of Shakespeare's plays has been influenced by the study of the Elizabethan theatre and the realization of the intrinsic connection between the dramatist and his milieu, his stage and his audience. The divorce between Shakespeare and his theatre which Lamb would have contemplated with pleasure is recognized as an abstraction. We can no longer sink the writer of plays in the poet or the Coleridge-minded philosopher. The truth that Shakespeare's art was both moulded and conditioned by the Elizabethan stage is an axiom of present-day criticism.

Linked with this historical study of the theatre is an aesthetic approach to the plays of Shakespeare based on the nature of the drama as an art form. The difference between life itself and art as a reconstruction of life is a central motif in this type of literary criticism. The freedom of the dramatist to draw the images of life "not laboriously but luckily," in the spirit of a painter rather than a photographer, is stressed. The intuitive, emotional, imaginative elements of the drama are, it is held, more im-

portant than its intellectual concepts. Above all, it is maintained that "the play's the thing," and its power to enthral its auditors and convince them of its reality in the sphere of art is the test of its veracity.

The valuable fruitage of these two branches of modern criticism, the historical and aesthetic, is self-evident. Yet, since the pendulum is apt to swing from the one extreme to the other, it may be questioned whether violent reaction from the canons of Romantic criticism has not distorted our perspective of Shakespeare's plays in certain important particulars. Few would be so conservative as to hold that flawless consistency and impeccable motivation exist in these dramas, but are the inconsistencies of character delineation and the breaks in adequate motivation so drastic as many twentieth-century critics consider them to be? Is justice being rendered to the intellectual grip as well as to the emotional thrust of Shakespeare's genius? Have not some of our modern aesthetic theorists, in their anxiety to emphasize the distinction between art and life, been led to underestimate what Hamlet declared to be the purpose of playing, "whose end, both at the first and now, was and is, to hold, as 'twere, the mirror up to nature; to show virtue her own feature, scorn her own image, and the very age and body of the time his form and pressure"?

## II

Professor Stoll, one of the ablest and most influential critics of our generation, is constantly inveighing against the attempt to trace in Shakespeare's plays a psychology that conforms to the logical processes of the mind in actuality. In his most radical utterances, psychology is so damned that its presence in a drama or an audience's consciousness of its presence is regarded as vitiating artistry. It is either fallacious and its motivation illusory, or it is practically non-existent. Yet what is normal psychology at bottom but the reasonable working of the human mind or an exposition of this; and can indifference to it be esteemed a virtue in Shakespeare's plays, or his art regarded as wedded to irrationality?

It is well in the face of such a challenge to go back to what Raleigh has called "the cool and manly utterances" of Dryden, Pope, and Johnson. Classicism has many deficiencies, but an undervaluation of reason is not amongst them. No quarrel with Shakespeare concerning his lack of observance of the classical unities blinded its great exponents to the informing rationality of his plays. It was Shakespeare's contact with reality which led Dryden to write: "He needed not the spectacles of books to read Nature; he looked inwards and found her there." Pope expands this in pregnant phrasing: "The Poetry of Shakespeare was Inspiration indeed: he is not so much an Imitator, as an Instrument of Nature; and 'tis not so just to say that he speaks from her, as that she speaks thro him." The sterling common sense of Dr. Johnson is never more in evidence than when he declares:

Shakespeare is, above all writers, at least above all modern writers, the poet of nature; the poet that holds up to his readers a faithful mirror of manners and of life. His characters . . . are the genuine progeny of common humanity, such as the world will always supply, and observation will always find. His persons act and speak by the influence of those general passions and principles by which all minds are agitated, and the whole system of life is continued in motion.

There are two plays of Shakespeare which have been reviewed in detail by modern critics in an attempt to prove that they contain striking examples of inconsistency in character drawing: *Antony and Cleopatra* and *Othello*. Professor Schücking has striven to show that the delineation of Cleopatra is self-contradictory. Largely on account of his absorption in separate scenes, Shakespeare, according to Schücking, has left unreconciled different conceptions of the Egyptian queen. The contrast becomes extreme when we compare the Cleopatra of the opening acts of the play, a coquette and a wanton, with the noble and heroic Cleopatra of the last act. It is somewhat unexpected to find Schücking's argument convincingly refuted by Stoll in an article on Cleopatra.[1] In his analysis of the death scene, Stoll points out that Cleopatra "though queenly and elevated is quite true to her earlier self." "Surely then," he concludes, "this character holds together as a living thing."

Yet the intrinsic consistency of character which Stoll argues for so ably in the case of Cleopatra is, according to him, quite lacking in Othello, at least from a psychological point of view. "What is to be made," he exclaims, "of this great heap of contradictions!" and he goes so far as to declare that Othello "is not a personality, not a psychological entity."[2]

Professor Stoll's position is not an unsupported one. It is a far cry back to Thomas Rymer's captious and vitriolic attack upon *Othello* in the seventeenth century, but it may be said to mark the genesis of criticism of the play on the grounds of improbability. Stopford Brooke, George Lewes, Frank Harris, William Archer, and Robert Bridges may be enumerated amongst later critics who, both from a dramatic and a literary standpoint, have dwelt upon inconsistencies in *Othello*. Stopford Brooke writes:

The conception of the play, the movement of it, the events in it, the bringing about of the catastrophe, are all apparently in the realm of Chance. There is a shocking unreasonableness about them, which is all the more curious when we consider that the construction of the play, the linking and the sequence of its scenes, is so eminently clear, so closely ordered by the imaginative reason and the logic of passion. This is a wonderful combination.

A wonderful combination forsooth! Adulation of Shakespeare could hardly go further than the critical somersault by means of which Brooke

[1] "Cleopatra" (*MLR*, XXIII, 1928, 145-63).

[2] No other contemporary critic has made such a thorough survey of *Othello* as Professor Stoll. He has dealt with it in *Othello: An Historical and Comparative Study*, in *Art and Artifice in Shakespeare*, and in *Shakespeare and Other Masters*. There has been, it seems to me, some modification of his earlier point of view in his later considerations of the play. Yet his main contention that the psychology of Othello is "paradoxical and fallacious" and the character drawing and motivation of the drama logically inconsistent is unaltered.

lauds "a shocking unreasonableness" in the warp and woof of the dramatic content of *Othello* as a virtue. "A king can do no wrong," and although Professor Stoll regards Shakespearean drama as in some respects conditioned by the comparatively primitive standards of the Elizabethan stage and its acceptance of popular and irrational conventions, he is as desirous, in his own way, to pay homage to Shakespeare; and to maintain that incredible psychology in his plays, so far from being a detriment, is a positive artistic advantage.

"There can be no great smoke arise, but there must be some fire," and the weight of critical opinion that there are incongruities in character drawing and motivation in *Othello* is not to be disregarded. Yet is there not a *via media* between the Romantic assertion that the psychology of the play is infallible, and the contention of a number of modern critics that it is riddled with psychological inconsistencies?

The famous Temptation scene in *Othello* is the crux of the drama; and if the fall of the Moor as depicted in it is preposterous and incredible, there is undeniably a basic rift in the motivation of the play and the integrity of its leading character. Mr. Stoll's challenging statement may be cited in this connection: "As a whole, in the relation of Othello tempted to Othello untempted, the psychology of the hero is false, or might be said to be non-existent, just as it is non-existent in the whole convention of Iago's impenetrable hypocrisy and his bamboozling of all the cleverest people in the play."

The core of my article will therefore consist of an analysis of the crucial Temptation scene and its motivation.

## III

At the outset, attention should be drawn to the significance of the scene's place in the evolution of the play. Professor Bradley has pointed out that the structure of *Othello* is unique among the tragedies of Shakespeare. The crisis of the drama, the Temptation scene, is long delayed. Iago's net is not thrown until Act III, Scene iii. As Bradley puts it: "In the first half of the play, the conflict is merely incubating." He proceeds to explain this exceptional construction as a method that suits a plot based on intrigue. There is a corollary to this explanation which Bradley does not expressly elucidate, although he gives a hint of it when he comments: "An elaborate plot was necessary to elicit the catastrophe." Not only does intrigue, *per se*, develop slowly, but, since it involves the trapping of the hero of the drama through a mental delusion which has no correspondence with external fact, this entrapment has to be made credible. The unique structure of *Othello* is evidence that Shakespeare, so far from being indifferent to the matter of the veracity of the Temptation scene, or relying merely on the Elizabethan stage convention of "the calumniator believed," has taken the utmost pains to pave the way for the feasibility of Othello's downfall.

Since the elaborate preparation for the Temptation scene is a part of its motivation, it is necessary to review briefly the complex factors that enter into it. They centre upon the character of Othello, the malignity of Iago and the subtlety of his intrigue, and the unusual circumstances connected with the marriage of Othello and Desdemona which help Iago to wreck their happiness. Each of these factors has been made the theme of voluminous criticism.

In general, I am in accord with the balanced and discriminating estimates of Bradley and Raleigh when they deal with the personality of Othello. While recognizing to the full the noble and magnanimous nature of the Moor, they maintain that there are elements in his make-up which cause him to be susceptible to the wiles of Iago. The drama is the tragic tale

> Of one not easily jealous, but, being wrought,
> Perplex'd in the extreme. . . .

Othello is pre-eminently a man of action. His nature with all its grandeur has a certain elemental simplicity. In any situation involving action he is thoroughly at home, but in the atmosphere of secret plotting, where thought rather than action is imperative, he is no match for the wily Iago. He lacks the subtle, penetrative intellect of Hamlet. "On matters like these" writes Bradley, alluding to the innuendoes and slanders of the Temptation scene, "Othello cannot think; he is accustomed to impulse, instinct, and action; these tedious processes of arguing on dishonour are torture to him; and when he tries to think, he thinks wrong." In addition to being a man of action, Othello is romantic, gifted with a wealth of poetic imagination; and his emotions, once they are unchained, are vehement and passionate. The self-control which he exhibits in the opening scenes of the play springs from his native dignity, fortified by high position and consciousness of royal ancestry. Yet we feel from the beginning his emotional fervency; and Shakespeare does not fail to give us glimpses of the volcanic fires of temperament which later have vent when his reason is overthrown. When quelling the threatened riot in Cyprus he exclaims:

> Now, by heaven,
> My blood begins my safer guides to rule,
> And passion, having my best judgment collied,
> Assays to lead the way.

The inability of the hero through some weak link in his own nature to cope with his environment is a central motif of Shakespearean tragedy. Although the theories of Coleridge and Goethe regarding Hamlet have been assailed, it is surely evident that his tragedy has its roots in his incapacity to deal with the world of action, whatever may be the precise causes of this failure. It is equally clear that the weakness of Othello is of an opposite character. Thoroughly competent in the sphere of action, he is crippled by both his gifts and his deficiencies in the sphere of thought. His emotion and his imagination drown his reason; his lack of intellectual

discernment ensnares him in Iago's trap; his inability to use the sword of action to pierce the nebulous mist of the villain's intrigue is a torment to him.

It has been urged, however, that the contrast between Othello's self-reliant mastery of the situations that confront him in the first half of the play, and his helplessness and frenzy when he becomes a victim of Iago, is too extreme. Is it likely or even credible that a man who holds the position of generalissimo in the state of Venice and has been accustomed to guide and command its armed forces, would be completely unstrung and maddened by the machinations of Iago? To bring Othello to book in this fashion is perhaps to inquire too curiously, and it is not my thesis to maintain that a play must be an infallible transcript of life. Yet history itself is not without illustration of men who after winning a great reputation in the field of action, have tragically failed to cope with intrigue.

The representation of the character of Iago and the spinning of his diabolical plot provide the second element that enters into the elaborate motivation of the Temptation scene. The unique lateness of the crisis of the play, to which I have already alluded, gives Shakespeare ample opportunity to make us realize the formidable nature of Othello's antagonist and the subtlety of his conspiracy. Iago's malignity, cunning intellect, driving energy of will, and powers of dissimulation are fully portrayed. The manner in which he gropes his way step by step as his machinations slowly take definite outline; the poisoning of the mind of Roderigo; the working-out of the scheme to disgrace Cassio; the gradual thickening of the atmosphere of evil—are cumulative in their effect. It is no ordinary foe and no hastily conceived plot that the hero has to grapple with. When Iago finally attacks Othello directly, our perception of the deadliness of his rapier thrusts is enhanced by all that we know of the most masterly villain Shakespeare ever drew and of his consummate skill in intrigue. The adroit hypocrisy of Iago, by means of which he establishes a reputation for honesty in the eyes of all the principal characters of the play, is an integral part of the motivation of the Temptation scene. As Schücking writes: "In all circumstances he successfully acts the old soldier with the rough outside and the honest heart." There are over twenty references to the assumed honesty of Iago throughout the drama. Such constant iteration is evidence of the care Shakespeare took to emphasize this particular element of psychological motivation as contributing to the fall of Othello.

The third group of factors which help to make the entrapment of the Moor credible relates to the exceptional circumstances of the marriage between Othello and Desdemona. They are of different race and colour. While it is true that the notion of *Kulturgeschichte* is foreign to Shakespeare, it is incomprehensible to me how anybody after seeing or reading *Othello* can brush aside these differences in race and colour as of no real consequence in connection with the tragic events of the drama. Stoll, however, discounts them, and he cites Bradley's criticism in support of his position.

Bradley does assert that so far as "the essentials of his character" are concerned, the representation of the hero as a Moor is not important, but in the same paragraph he writes: "I do not mean that Othello's race is a matter of no account. It has, as we shall presently see, its importance in the play. It makes a difference to our idea of him; it makes a difference to the action and to the catastrophe." Both Bradley and Stoll rightly reject Schlegel's conception of the barbaric nature of Othello. At the same time they recognize that the romantic glamour, the poetic imagination, and, according to Bradley, the hot-bloodedness of the hero, are to some extent attributable to the delineation of him as a Moor. It may be granted that there is only a veneer of racial psychology in Othello, so far as "the essentials of his character" are involved. It counts for about as much as the Italian background of Shakespeare's comedies, not by any means negligible, yet subordinate in elemental characterization. Nevertheless, the title of the play is *Othello, the Moor of Venice:* and when we come to deal with the assumed historical environment of the drama, the question is not as to whether from the point of view of *Kulturgeschichte* Shakespeare has given us a profound or even an adequate analysis of Moorish psychology, but rather of the interrelations and reactions of the various characters of the drama in conformity with the premise that the hero is a Moor and the heroine a Venetian. The fact that the marriage of a Moor and a Venetian does seem extraordinary and objectionable to Desdemona's fellow-countrymen is clearly illustrated in the text of Shakespeare's tragedy.

The colour of Othello is an even more significant element of motivation than his race in the evolution of the plot of the play. It has been I think sufficiently proven that while the hero, as his personality is revealed in speech and action, is the poet's romantic conception of an adventurous and noble Moor, his colour is black rather than bronze, since Shakespeare did not discriminate between the outward cast of features of the Negroid and Moorish races. It is amply evident in the text of the drama that the contrast in colour between Othello and Desdemona makes their marriage seem a strange and unnatural one. Stoll denies this, and asserts that only in the evil mind of Iago and in the embittered accusations of Brabantio are there any intimations of colour prejudice in connection with their union.

There are at least eighteen references to the colour of Othello in the course of the play, many of them of a detailed character. The reiteration of allusions to this is as insistent as the emphasis on Iago's reputed honesty. Not only Iago, Brabantio, and Roderigo speak of it, but also Desdemona, Emilia, and Othello himself. It has been argued that we must discount references to the Moor's colour on the lips of his enemies, but could Brabantio have had such a violent reaction to the marriage of his daughter if there had been no colour prejudice in the minds of his fellow-Venetians? Has he not this in mind when he speaks of her as having incurred "a general mock"? Would he have harped upon the theme that Desdemona through the spell of magic drugs had been constrained "to fall in love with what

she fear'd to look on," if none of the Senators except himself felt that Othello's colour constituted any objection to the marriage? The heroine, at the crisis of her elopement, defends her lover before the Senate by answering the underlying reservations which she knows her countrymen must have, on the ground of colour, concerning her marriage.

> My heart's subdu'd
> Even to the very quality of my lord.
> I saw Othello's visage in his mind.

When Othello is ensnared in the Temptation scene, the seeds of Iago's insinuations regarding the difference in colour between him and his wife are dropped on a fertile soil. "And yet, how nature erring from itself," Othello broods, showing his consciousness of the strangeness of his marriage. "Haply, for I am black" he exclaims, a little later on, in accounting for the causes of Desdemona's infidelity. At the acme of his misery he cries:

> Her name, that was as fresh
> As Dian's visage, is now begrim'd and black
> As mine own face.

Emilia, during her impassioned vindication of the purity of her mistress, hurls epithets at Othello, whose sting lies in their allusions to his colour.

> O, the more angel she,
> And you the blacker devil!
> . . . . . .
> She was too fond of her most filthy bargain.

Apart from the written text of the play, would the representation of Othello on the Elizabethan stage as a blackamoor, although of great and heroic personality, arouse no feelings that the marriage between him and Desdemona was strange or almost contrary to nature? Could this fail to be a potent element of motivation in convincing the audience of the credibility of Iago's disrupting their union?

Subordinate, yet contributory, factors of motivation in the Temptation scene lie in the contrast between the social environment and experience of Othello and Desdemona, and in the difference between their ages. Othello is ignorant of fashionable aristocratic life in Venice, a city notorious for its licentiousness, and Iago cunningly takes advantage of this:

> I know our country disposition well;
> In Venice they do let heaven see the pranks
> They dare not show their husbands; their best conscience
> Is not to leave't undone, but keep't unknown.

When Othello begs the Senate to allow his wife to accompany him to Cyprus, he alludes indirectly to his age:

> Vouch with me heaven, I therefore beg it not
> To please the palate of my appetite,
> Nor to comply with heat—the young affects
> In me defunct.

After his mind has been poisoned by Iago, the Moor thinks that his lack of courtier graces and his age as well as his colour may be responsible for Desdemona's misconduct:

> Haply, for I am black
> And have not those soft parts of conversation
> That chamberers have, or for I am declin'd
> Into the vale of years (yet that's not much).

Unlike Romeo and Juliet, young lovers from the same stratum of Italian society, Othello and Desdemona are bereft of the aids to mutual understanding constituted by a common social tradition and correspondence in age. While these divergences captivate their imaginations at the outset, they become grave sources of danger after suspicion and jealousy have clouded the intellect of Othello. Desdemona's necessary subterfuge and concealment in connection with her elopement become a minor element of motivation in the Temptation scene. Iago recalls Brabantio's ominous warning:

> Look to her, Moor, if thou hast eyes to see.
> She has deceiv'd her father, and may thee.

He persuades Othello, whose judgment is warped by his passions, that this is an indication of his wife's guile.

> She did deceive her father, marrying you;
> And when she seem'd to shake and fear your looks,
> She lov'd them most.

When all these various strands of motivation which contribute to the downfall of Othello are woven together they form a pretty stout rope. Nor does the psychology inherent in them seem to me "fallacious and unreal." As Hazlitt comments: "The progressive preparation for the catastrophe is wonderfully managed." When we approach the Temptation scene, we carry with us all the painstaking and elaborate motivation of the plot embodied in the first three acts of the play.

Before dealing with the crux of the drama, it is necessary to consider how much importance must be attached to the independence and "tendency to episodic intensification" of the separate scenes in Shakespeare's plays on which Schücking and Stoll lay so much stress. Goethe's words, in his conversation with Eckermann on Shakespeare, are several times cited by Stoll. "He regarded his plays as a lively and changing scene which should pass rapidly before eye and ear, and his only interest was to be effective and significant for the moment." There is a residuum of truth in Goethe's dictum, but surely only a half-truth at best. In view of the critical acumen of Goethe, one can scarcely believe that this statement, jotted down by Eckermann as he recalled the remarks of the German poet, would not have been qualified by Goethe in a more comprehensive estimate of Shakespeare's genius. The fallacy latent in this judgment could readily be demonstrated from both the nature of Shakespeare's dramas as art and the performance of his plays on the stage. The outline and architectonics of any great work of art are at least as important as its details. Shakespeare's dramas would dissolve into the wildest vagaries of decadent romanticism and artistic chaos if "his only interest was to be effective and significant for the

moment." From the point of view of dramatic performance it is self-evident that there must be a cumulative building-up of impressions during the course of a play. No following individual scenes, however vivid, can compensate us for an inability to grasp the full outline of character portraiture.

We should not, however, ignore the element of truth in the assertion that the separate scenes of a play are heightened and intensified in the interests of dramatic effectiveness. A work of art is a painting rather than a photograph, focusing attention on what is qualitative and significant in human life rather than on what is merely quantitative and superficial. The effect of Shakespeare's plays, as Professor Stoll puts it, "is one of accumulation and compression, of simplification and concentration; to which all art, and especially drama, tends." In the tragedy of *Othello* can be found a certain precipitousness, a heightening of light and a deepening of shade, contrasts in bold juxtaposition with intervening steps leapt over. During the Temptation scene, the exigencies of dramatic representation must also be kept in mind. Shakespeare is not writing a three-volume novel in which he would have plenty of elbow-room to trace the gradual growth of Othello's jealous suspicion. This must all be packed within the time that can be allotted to it in the few hours' traffic of the stage. The process has to be foreshortened. To demand infallible motivation throughout a Shakespearean drama in the sense that everything must be a literal transcript of external actuality would be to ignore the distinction between art and life.

Yet a fundamental break in psychological motivation, involving two self-contradictory conceptions of the leading character in a play, would be so drastic a departure from life as to shatter even artistic veracity. Whatever their romantic colouring, the tragedies of Shakespeare are basically realistic in their representation of human life. Nor would any artistic legerdemain, uniformity of tone, emotional pitch, and so forth, gloss over such palpable irrationality as two Othellos in one drama, or prevent this from being a flaw in the play.

Apart from one or two exceptions, notably Thomas Rymer, Shakespearean critics down to our own time have praised the Temptation scene in *Othello*, regarding it as a high-water mark of dramatic psychology and art. Johnson refers to the artful naturalness of "the gradual progress which Iago makes in the Moor's conviction, and the circumstances which he employs to enflame him." Raleigh, alluding to this section of the play, writes: "Any one who would take the measure of Shakespeare's almost superhuman skill when he rises to meet a difficulty should read the Third Act of *Othello*. The quickest imagination ever given to man is there on its mettle, and racing."[3] Stoll, however, in *Othello: An Historical and Com-*

[3]Cf. Hazlitt's appreciation in *Characters of Shakespear's Plays:* "The third act of *Othello* is his finest display, not of knowledge or passion separately, but of the two combined, of the knowledge of character with the expression of passion, of consummate art in the

*parative Study* and *Art and Artifice in Shakespeare* is sweeping in his criticism, not only of the absence of psychological motivation in the victimizing of Othello, but also of the lack of fidelity to life in Iago's procedure. Were it not for the Elizabethan stage convention of the calumniator credited without rhyme or reason and the popular appeal of melodrama, he believes, the defects in the motivation and the preposterousness of Iago's impositions would have been patent to Shakespeare's audience. In a study of Iago in a later work, *Shakespeare and Other Masters*, Mr. Stoll, though more conservative, still maintains:

> In itself, to be sure, this method of suggestion is psychological, but for realism it is here too little adapted to the circumstances, carried with too high a hand; and if it were not for the convention, together with the unimpeachable prestige of Iago's reputation for honesty and sagacity, the General must needs soon perceive in his disquieting counsellor the intruder and intriguer that he is and drive him off and knock him down.

## IV

A succinct analysis of the Temptation scene in the light of all that has preceded it in the play, will it seems to me reveal that neither Iago's method of procedure nor the credibility of Othello's downfall are as divorced from reality as Stoll considers them to be.

There is and must be, as has been previously stated, dramatic foreshortening of the successive stages in the poisoning of Othello's mind. So much we must grant to art as contrasted with life. Yet the greatness of Shakespeare's genius is finally illustrated in the gradations through which he has contrived to lengthen out the process of Iago's intrigue within the compass of a single scene, so as to convey in the midst of the rapid tempo of the play an impression of gradual progress. The movement of the Temptation scene is a crescendo, or perhaps it may more aptly be likened to the movement of a mounting tide. The waves of suspicion beating upon Othello's mind advance through hints and innuendoes leading up to direct accusation of Cassio and Desdemona. In Iago's artful hesitations, broken clauses, repetitions, and withdrawals, there are momentary, apparent retreats of the waves, although the tide is in reality steadily rising. The emotional as well as the intellectual movement is a crescendo, the gradations of which are definitely marked. In connection with the question of the credibility of the Temptation scene we must bear in mind that Shakespeare's art is reinforced by all those potent aids inherent in the concrete nature of the drama. It is difficult to over-estimate the importance of the actors' intonations, facial expressions, and gestures as contributing to the convincing character of the Temptation scene. *Othello* is double-barrelled in its theatrical demand. It has two great roles and requires the combination of two fine actors. Who can measure the difference between the mere reading of the Temptation scene, and the hearing of it enacted with Sir

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keeping up of appearances with the profound workings of nature, and the convulsive movements of uncontrollable agony, of the power of inflicting torture and of suffering it.

Henry Irving and Edwin Booth playing the parts of Othello and Iago, roles which they interchanged on alternate nights?

The beginning of Iago's attack upon Othello may be said to indicate the pattern of his procedure throughout. It is the dexterous art of the fencer, in an intellectual sphere, that is constantly in evidence. The ejaculation, "Ha! I like not that," is the first swift flash of Iago's inimitable rapier. Then, in response to Othello's rejoinder, "What dost thou say?" he is instantly on guard: "Nothing my lord; or if—I know not what." The cautious wiliness of his approach to his dangerous theme is marvellously delineated. Stoll says that instead of following Iago's insinuations "with bated breath and all agape with fear," the hero "should have struck him, as at Aleppo once he did the turban'd Turk." But, as Raleigh has pointed out, Iago is well aware of his peril, and he gives his victim no chance for indignation until he has warped the Moor's judgment and persuaded him of the likelihood of his wife's infidelity.

There are at least three gradations in that portion of the Temptation scene represented by the first converse of Iago and Othello. At the outset, Iago's hints are purposely vague and indirect. While availing himself of the circumstance that Cassio had been Othello's ambassador in the course of his wooing of Desdemona, he never specifically accuses them of infidelity. Interspersed with his subtle hesitations and repetitions, through which he conveys the impression that he is reluctant to disclose the dark thoughts in his mind, are protestations of love for Othello; and his assumed loyalty and honesty are a protective cloak to avert the wrath of the hero. Even though the inference is unmistakable, when he dwells upon the preciousness of good name and the devastating effects of jealousy he still confines himself to generalities. While Othello may seem to lend too ready an ear to Iago's hints in the initial stage of their interview, there are minor shadings and transitions which serve to depict a progressive disintegration rather than an immediate overthrow of his reason. The Moor's entreaty, "Show me thy thought," is reiterated in a way that reveals his deepening suspicion: "Give thy worst of thoughts the worst of words"; and finally, when he is resolved to wrest Iago's secret from him, he exclaims: "By heaven, I'll know thy thoughts!"

What may be called the second main gradation in the first conversation between Othello and Iago in the Temptation scene is marked by the Moor's open reference to the assumed infidelity of his wife. Only then does Iago venture to directly insinuate that Desdemona has been guilty of an intrigue with Cassio. Even at this juncture, his words are general in their character: "Look to your wife; observe her well with Cassio."

The third of the graduated phases of the interview is reached when Iago speaks of the disparities of the marriage of Othello and Desdemona, and dwells on those circumstances that are weak links in their union. At this point he gathers together the various threads of motivation which Shakespeare has taken such pains to elaborate and stress in the opening

acts of the play. It should be noted that the villain does not venture to introduce these until Othello's judgment has been clouded by the nightmare of suspicion. The racial cleavage between Othello and Desdemona is driven home by Iago reminding the hero that as a Moor he is ignorant of his wife's social background—fashionable life in Venice and its proverbial licentiousness. Reference is next made to the way in which Desdemona deceived her father in connection with her elopement. Iago is still afraid to mention the tenderest and most vulnerable point of all, the difference in colour, but Othello, brooding upon this, gives him an opportunity in his unguarded words: "And yet, how nature erring from itself." Like a flash, Iago strikes to kill; and in his representation of the strangeness and abnormality of the fair Venetian's choice of a man black in colour for a husband, he goes further than before in accusing her of unnaturalness and perversion. That Othello's reason is not entirely unhinged at this juncture is shown by his recoil from Iago's language and his dismissal of him. The full tide of passion is not yet unleashed, and only through gestures, facial expressions, and momentary ejaculations are the mounting emotions of Othello revealed.

The soliloquy of Othello that follows Iago's departure mediates the change for the worse in his state of being, apparent at the outset of his second interview with the villain. This change is so drastic that the question of adequate motivation to account for it seems even more pertinent than it is in connection with the preceding conversation. Deeply troubled and suspicious as Othello was at the close of that colloquy, he still preserved some measure of self-control. In the second interview, reason and any semblance of reserve are thrown to the winds, unbridled emotion has full sway, and pearls are cast before swine when Othello in the presence of Iago speaks in the most unrestrained way of the infamous conduct of his wife. "Is this the noble Moor," we ask with Lodovico, whose self-restraint was so admirably exhibited before the Venetian Senate?

> Is this the nature
> That passion could not shake? whose solid virtue
> The shot of accident nor dart of chance
> Could neither graze nor pierce?

An important element of motivation in accounting for the Moor's frenzied state, is the potency of the emotion that has unstrung his reason. Othello is not like Posthumus, innately of a jealous disposition. Even in the later acts of the play, as Bradley has pointed out, the deepest source of his suffering is "the wreck of his faith and love." Yet in Othello's character are qualities which aid Iago in making him a victim of jealousy. His noble simplicity and singleness of soul—the magnanimity, generosity, and trustfulness which shine so brightly in the sphere of action—lead him to be credulous in an alien environment, entangled in the coils of intrigue. Iago, who is an adept in turning virtue into pitch, takes advantage of the defects, if they may be called so, of Othello's great qualities.

> The Moor is of a free and open nature
> That thinks men honest that but seem to be so;
> And will as tenderly be led by th' nose
> As asses are.

In addition, once his judgment has been distorted by Iago's insidious wiles, the spark of jealousy is fanned into flame by the endowments of his temperament, his tremendous emotional capacity, and his lively and susceptible imagination. The almost incredible speed with which jealousy can bedevil the mind and the violence of its manifestations, are attested in common human experience. "Jealousy," says the Bible, "is cruel as the grave: the coals thereof are coals of fire, which hath a most vehement flame." Shakespeare's descriptions of this virulent passion, placed on the lips of Iago, ring as true to life as the words of the Bible:

> Dangerous conceits are in their natures poisons
> Which at the first are scarce found to distaste,
> But with a little act upon the blood
> Burn like the mines of sulphur.

> O, beware, my lord, of jealousy!
> It is the green-ey'd monster, which doth mock
> The meat it feeds on.

Besides his individual temperament, Othello, as a Moor, has the hot-bloodedness of a southern race in his veins. The uncontrollable swiftness of the jealous vendettas of the south is proverbial.

The dramatic foreshortening of art within the limited compass of a play is undeniably a factor in the rapidity with which Othello loses his faith in the virtue of his wife. Shakespeare must also be granted the aid of the illusion of action taking place off-stage, an impression which an audience sub-consciously receives. When Othello and Iago enter conversing, it seems as though the villain had been hounding his victim in the intervals of theatrical presentation. Yet, keeping in view all the circumstances that have been dwelt upon, the sheer psychological motivation in *Othello* of jealousy overthrowing a noble mind in a very brief period of time is surely a pretty close approximation to what happens in actual life.

As the stresses and elisions of poetry, its concentration on essentials rather than irrelevances, are in keeping with the nature of art as a qualitative and significant representation of life, in like fashion, the stresses and elisions of the drama, its daring juxtaposition of contrasts with minor regard for intervening stages of transition, are basically artistic. Yet if the contrasts are absolutely contrary to reason, they destroy even the illusion of reality, since our minds do function in watching a play. It is remarkable how in the midst of the swiftly moving action of *Othello*, in the whirlwind of passion, Shakespeare introduces gradations and progressions to motivate and make credible his plot. One of these gradations is the difference between Iago's guarded and indirect allusions to Desdemona in his first interview with Othello, and his carnal and revolting references to her presumed intrigue with Cassio in his second talk with the Moor. It is only

when Othello's mind has been thoroughly poisoned and his judgment unbalanced that Iago mentions his flimsy so-called circumstantial proofs—the dream of Cassio, the incident of the handkerchief, and the boasts of Cassio regarding his conquest—which lead on to the gross imposition of the overheard conversation.

The gradations of Othello's emotions are clearly marked in his five interviews with Desdemona between the second scene of Act III and the death-bed scene of Act V. In the first of these interviews Othello has complete confidence in his wife. In the second, after Iago's aspersions, he is troubled, but his manner is quiet rather than stormy. In the third, his veiled innuendoes are indicative of the emotional disturbances in his inner being and when he questions his wife regarding her handkerchief he is close to the breaking point. In the fourth, he keeps himself in hand at the outset, but finally strikes Desdemona and his self-control is completely shattered. In the fifth, he plays with the horrible fancy that his wife is an inmate of a house of ill-fame and openly accuses her of adultery.

The delineation of Desdemona in these five scenes is equally important as an element of motivation in the play. All of those attributes of her nature which contribute to the success of Iago's intrigue are exhibited. Her gentleness inhibits her from challenging Othello's covert insinuations, or calling him to account for his change in manner and behaviour. Her innocence and purity make her think it inconceivable that anybody should suspect her of unchastity, and consequently prevent her from discerning the cause of her husband's unreasoning passion. Her child-like quality leads her to look up to Othello, a man much older than herself, with somewhat of the deference and timidity a child feels in the presence of a parent; and this is an obstacle to a frank understanding between them.

## V

The purpose of this article has been to stress the rational element in the motivation and character portraiture of *Othello*. In doing so I am not contending that the play is an exact copy of actuality such as some critics of the Romantic era conceived it to be. In life itself we do not find undeviating logical consistency, and as Professor Wright has illustrated in connection with Hamlet in his admirable essay, "Reality and Inconsistency in Shakspeare's Characters," the more a great character in fiction approximates the rotundities of life, the more unable we shall be to account for all his words and actions by the measuring stick of rigid psychological consistency. Moreover, art is entitled to its own sort of foot-looseness; and though in some ways its rational motivation may be more rigorous than that of life itself, in other ways it is freer to take liberties with the logic of events. The surface irrationalities of *Othello*—the use of double time, so effective in the drama, but not literally credible in life, the lack of any chance for Cassio to have an intrigue with Desdemona after the landing in Cyprus, the foreshortening and intensifying of the processes of thought

and action in the brief span available for the acting of a play—are in themselves a warning to a critic not to blur the distinction between art and life. And yet, granting to art these justifiable deviations from rigid logical consistency in representing the truth of character, we still expect rational motivation in a masterpiece. If a play in its portrayal of men and women does not convey a convincing impression of integrity of character, it can never be, in Dryden's words, "a just and lively image of human nature, representing its passions and humours, and the changes of fortune to which it is subject for the delight and instruction of mankind." Underneath all the minor variations of life—and beneath the surface irrationalities of dramatic technique—there must run a fundamental coherence of integrity of character. The grave rifts and contradictions in basic psychological motivation which Schücking and Stoll maintain—mistakenly, I believe—are in evidence in Shakespeare's dramas would, it seems to me, be discordant with the belief that a play should be "a just and lively image of human nature." Surely a play should not constrain us so to juggle with reason as to assume that artistic integrity of character is compatible with psychological anarchy. It is true that emotion and imagination are primary in art, reason (using the word in the limited sense of ratiocination) secondary. But it is quite another matter to assert that reason can be thrown to the four winds in the composition of a play; and that the wits of an audience are so drugged by the specious enchantments of art that they have no minds left to detect glaring contradictions in motivation and characterization.

It is far from my intention to underrate the positive contribution to the interpretation of Shakespeare's plays made by the historical and aesthetic studies of contemporary criticism. The realization of the influence of the Elizabethan stage and audience upon Shakespeare's dramatic genius, and the recognition of the difference between art and life as affecting our conception of the nature of a play, have been fruitful in their results. Yet any further advance in Shakespearean interpretation must it seems to me lie in the endeavour to find a *via media* between the extremes of Romantic criticism on the one hand and the extremes of certain schools of modern historical and aesthetic criticism on the other. It is difficult to define the nice balance between the swings of the pendulum to the right and left. Historically, it necessitates a judicious estimate of Shakespeare's relation to his environment. To what extent was he conditioned by this, and to what extent did he rise above it? Over-emphasis of the theatrical setting has led some critics to write as though his art were in almost slavish bondage to utility. But it does not follow that because he was an Elizabethan, he was compelled to pander to every popular taste however primitive, or every stage convention however unreasonable.[4] Aesthetically, the conception of

[4]Among the more important essays on this theme are Bradley's *Shakespeare's Theatre and Audience*, Bridges' "The Influence of the Audience on Shakespeare's Drama," and Dover Wilson's *The Elizabethan Shakespeare*. Benjamin T. Spencer's recent essay, "This

Shakespeare's drama as an infallible transcript of life must be modified, as Stoll fully realizes, by a discriminating evaluation of the interrelations of life and art, their differences and their likenesses. This may always be debatable ground, since it impinges on that subtle aesthetic crux, which has exercised the greatest minds in philosophy since the days of Plato and Aristotle.

In the most famous passage of *The Advancement of Learning*, Bacon says of poetry: "And therefore it was ever thought to have some participation of divineness, because it doth raise and erect the mind, by submitting the shows of things to the desires of the mind." One of these desires of the mind is that its innate rationality should have due place in art, as well as the passions that have their roots in man's emotional nature. As the *Sophia* and *Techne* of Greek art are never lost even in its most impassioned utterances, so the sanity, artistic self-control, and mastery of Shakespeare's acute and powerful mind are constantly in evidence throughout his plays. He rarely, if ever, tears a passion to tatters in a way that prostitutes or obliterates reason. His wisdom is equal to his imaginative gifts and emotional endowment.

> Sure, he that made us with such large discourse,
> Looking before and after, gave us not
> That capability and godlike reason
> To fust in us unused.

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Elizabethan Shakespeare," printed in the *Sewanee Review* (XLIX, 536-52), is worthy of note. In this article Professor Spencer protests against interpretations which reconstruct "the Elizabethan mind," assume that it is a constant, and thus make "the rigid and commonplace mentality" of Shakespeare's contemporaries the measure of his plays.

# REVIEWS

## MAINLY ABOUT SHAKESPEARE*

R. S. Knox

By the death of Mr. John Palmer in 1944 England lost one of its most scholarly and versatile dramatic critics. As a young man he had been the successor to Bernard Shaw and Max Beerbohm on the staff of the *Saturday Review*. In his later life he joined that characteristically English class who, as public servants, find or are tolerantly given time from their professional duties to follow their scholarly interests. From being a critic of the contemporary theatre Mr. Palmer had turned to the drama, and especially the comic drama, of the past, firmly establishing his reputation as critic and scholar by his books on Restoration comedy, Molière, and Jonson. At the time of his death he was at work on two books on Shakespeare. *Political Characters of Shakespeare* he saw in part through the press. *Comic Characters of Shakespeare*, a small group of essays which he meant to extend, has been published posthumously.

Of the two Shakespeare books that on the political characters is the more important. It is a good complement and corrective to some other recent studies of Shakespeare's Histories. The fashion of the moment is to see Shakespeare in terms of his own time, to stress the pertinence for the Elizabethans of the lessons the dramatist gave from previous history, and to find among the historical figures, often with contradictory assurance, explicit or implicit allusions to contemporary personages. Mr. Palmer of course admits the relevance of the plays for Elizabethan politics. Shakespeare, a citizen of the New Monarchy, naturally accepted the ideology of his time; and one of the staunchest of its convictions was the belief, forced home by the dramatist, in the necessity of a strong government which would keep disorder from the state. Moreover the historical themes which he dramatized were in large part determined for him. The story of the past most alive for his audience was the Contention of the Two Famous Houses; "they savoured upon the stage the calamities from which by God's grace and the Tudor system they had successfully emerged, and nourished a growing pride in themselves as a united people." That there are side glances in the plays at contemporary figures, incidents, and problems, Mr.

**Political Characters of Shakespeare.* By John Palmer. London: Macmillan and Co. [Toronto: Macmillan Co. of Canada]. 1945. Pp. xii, 335. ($6.00)

*Comic Characters of Shakespeare.* By John Palmer. London: Macmillan and Co. [Toronto: Macmillan Co. of Canada]. 1946. Pp. xyi, 135. ($2.00)

*Sources for a Biography of Shakespeare.* By E. K. Chambers. Oxford: at the Clarendon Press [Toronto: Clarke, Irwin]. 1946. Pp. 80. ($2.00)

*Shakespeare and Jonson: Their Reputations in the Seventeenth Century Compared;* 2 vols. By Gerald E. Bentley. Chicago: University of Chicago Press [Toronto: W. J. Gage]. 1945. Pp. iv, 307; viii, 149. ($10.00)

*Shakespeare's Imagination: A Study of the Psychology of Association and Inspiration.* By Edward A. Armstrong. London, Eng.: Lindsay Drummond. 1946. Pp. 191. (10/6)

Palmer would allow, but he would spurn such a distorted notion, advanced solemnly by another recent commentator, that the relationship of King John and Arthur shadowed that of Elizabeth to Mary of Scotland.

Two related themes, neither new but each freshly argued and expounded, inform the book. The first is that, although the plays are unmatched in any literature for their political content, Shakespeare himself was not politically minded. "The astonishing veracity of his political characters is due to the small interest which he took in politics as compared with the great interest he took in human nature. . . . His main concern was not so much in the politics as with the men who made them." This view is elaborated by a detailed commentary on five of the historical figures, Richard of Gloucester, Richard of Bordeaux, Henry of Monmouth, Brutus, and Coriolanus, and by a conclusion which centres on Faulconbridge. Such character studies may by some be set aside as old-fashioned, but they bring a brighter light on Shakespeare the artist and the dramatic historian than many of the more novel and pretentious "approaches." Mr. Palmer finds *King John* and more particularly the portrayal of the Bastard the most directly illuminating for Shakespeare's attitude to politics, for his ironic detachment, his impartiality, which in the last resort was the outcome of his indifference. Faulconbridge, with his harangue on "Commodity" is "the vehicle of Shakespeare's genial contempt for the grandiloquent impostures of public life." Falstaff, one might add, is another such vehicle. In the last sentence of the book Mr. Palmer succinctly sums up his first thesis: "Shakespeare had no great interest in public affairs. He was interested in persons and many of them just happen to have been public persons. Though he could draw for us a masterly portrait of a successful king, a republican worthy, a great soldier or a proud nobleman, though he could present the tragical fall of princes as intimately as the not less tragical rise of pretenders to sovereignty and power, he will turn aside at the critical moment to give us some touch of nature." Play after play brings home that truth. So often the emotional climax or at least the most appealing scene is when we leave the political for the purely human plane and the great are made level with ordinary men: Richard the Second in his contemplation of life's irony, Brutus with his wife or in the Quarrel scene, Coriolanus obeying his mother, the "touch of Harry in the night."

The second theme, again well-worn and renovated, issues, we presume, from Mr. Palmer's own knowledge of political life—the agelessness of Shakespeare's delineation of his public figures. The problems and the types of men who have dealt with them are not greatly changed. "The expedients to which Shakespeare's political characters resort, the devices by which they recommend themselves to public favour, the motives by which they are governed, the principles which they profess, even the language which they use to glorify or extenuate their behaviour, can be matched from history at any period and never more aptly than from our own contemporary records. A politician can find no better handbook to

success than the political plays of Shakespeare." This relevance to later history and to the present scene, though never unduly pressed, is made sufficiently clear; and, of course, it is "merely an incidental consequence of the fidelity to truth with which the dramatist depicted his political characters."

In the introduction to *Comic Characters of Shakespeare* Mr. Palmer briefly sums up the points he later seeks to illustrate. Once again the novelty lies in the lively illustration and in the many shrewd comments made in passing rather than in his initial contentions. It is a commonplace to say that the inspiration of Shakespeare's comedy is sympathy and not satire, and that the comic character "to be seen without distortion, must appear in its own environment." Yet we forget the triteness as the features of Shakespeare's comic art are revealed in the chosen plays and figures—Berowne, Touchstone, Shylock, Bottom, Beatrice, and Benedick. He shows how Shakespeare divides our sympathies, how his creative imagination counters the stock ideas which he accepts or, as with Cressida, changes an initial mood of detachment. In *Love's Labour's Lost* and *As You Like It* Shakespeare "throws himself heart and soul into a convention and at the same time subjects it to the searching eye of the comic muse." *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, which is not discussed and which is so often misinterpreted, would have shown that practice even more clearly. One naturally turns to find what is said of Shylock; and, though one may demur, there is the full compensation of a stimulating discussion of the relation of plot and character, of free will and predestination among the figures of Shakespeare's mimic world.

Like Mr. Palmer, Sir Edmund Chambers has done most of his scholarly work as a civil servant. Indeed he is the most eminent living example of that splendid English tradition, as he is the most eminent living authority in the field of our older drama. Compared with his previous monumental volumes the present book, *Sources for a Biography of Shakespeare*, is merely a slim afterthought. It presents the substance of a brief course of lectures given to students working for the degree of Bachelor of Letters at Oxford. The book stays strictly by its title. It is a precise survey of the ground covered in the compilation of a personal biography of Shakespeare, excluding, except incidentally, the problems of his dramatic career. It is further meant to show the kind of material likely to be available for any comparable biography. The various records are explained and classified, and the relevant items are given in full or in summary. There are brief chapters on contemporary allusions, traditions, the inferences from Shakespeare's poems, with a final slight bibliographical note.

As one would expect, Chambers keeps well on the conservative side, warning us against the danger of subjectivity, his own as well as that of others. Since his classic volumes, *William Shakespeare: A Study of Facts and Problems*, the most exciting investigations into the records have been those of Professor Leslie Hotson. Chambers, however, is doubtful of

Hotson's chief find, his identification of Shallow with the shady London Justice, Gardiner. On the other hand he stays by his own guess that W. S., the "old player" mentioned in *Willobie His Avisa* who urges his friend to woo the lady, is Shakespeare; and he again scolds Sir Sidney Lee for his curt "subjective" rejection as idle gossip of the comment of the seventeenth-century clergyman, Davies, that Shakespeare "dyed a papist." Needless to say this little book will deservedly become a stand-by for students.

Professor G. E. Bentley in *The Jacobean and Caroline Stage* carried forward Sir Edmund Chambers' work on *The Elizabethan Stage*. His two volumes on *Shakespeare and Jonson* are a by-product of that research. They present and analyse the recorded evidence for the comparative reputation in the seventeenth century of the two dramatists. He finds just cause to challenge the conclusions that might be drawn from the previous allusion books. Judged by the strict but fair test which he sets up, many of the accepted Shakespeare allusions must be discarded. To the number thus reduced he adds 59 new allusions found by himself, but adds also 1,079 new Jonson allusions. These additions he has collected in the second volume of the present work. His analysis of the total allusions and the conclusions drawn therefrom are given in the first volume; and they make a fascinating study. The whole body of references is divided as to kind and significance into twenty categories, distributed throughout the decades of the century according to the date of printing. It would be hard to find fault with this careful, orderly cataloguing, but in the inferences drawn it should be kept in mind that, compared with Shakespeare, Jonson was a learned dramatist who would naturally appeal to more of those recording their views in print or commonplace books. On the other hand Pepys might be taken as a fairly average playgoer of the mid-century, and, although he saw more Shakespeare plays, he had certainly more praise for Jonson. "Most of his superlatives are used to express the unexampled badness of Shakespeare's plays and the unexampled excellence of Jonson's." Moreover it was often the additions to Shakespeare which especially appealed to Pepys, like the seaman's dance in *The Tempest* and "the variety of dancing and musique" in *Macbeth*. Indeed throughout the second half of the century it is often impossible to know whether the reference is to genuine Shakespeare or to an adaptation.

Many of Professor Bentley's findings from the evidence are interesting; some of them are surprising. If we limit ourselves to the records, there is no doubt about Jonson's predominance. He was more frequently referred to in every decade except in the last, when Shakespeare's reputation was rapidly growing. Where a name is used as a standard of greatness there are three times as many allusions to Jonson. If the popularity of individual plays may be judged by references to them, six of Jonson's are before any of Shakespeare's. *The Tempest*—and it may often have been the Restoration version—heads the Shakespeare list. *Hamlet* comes fifth and fifteenth in the joint list. Shakespeare's romantic comedies, like *The Merchant*

*of Venice*, *As You Like It*, and *Twelfth Night*, are almost ignored. In one class only Shakespeare far overtops his rival, in the allusions to characters. Here Falstaff easily leads, and seven of Shakespeare's figures precede the first of Jonson's, Dol Common, who is narrowly beaten by Hamlet.

It is a far cry from Professor Bentley's statistical clarity to exploring with Mr. E. A. Armstrong the realm of *Shakespeare's Imagination*. Mr. Armstrong, we are told, is a bird-lover, and appropriately we are made to flit with him from flower to flower in the Shakespeare garden. He seeks to capture the secret of the dramatist's images, "to study Shakespeare's mind in the travail of composition by investigating the associative processes revealed in his imagery," which becomes a study of the human imagination. Whiter started this quest 150 years ago when he remarked on the frequent and natural association in Shakespeare's mind of dogs, candy, and flattery. Miss Spurgeon and a dozen others have today followed Whiter's lead. Mr. Armstrong picks his special image "clusters," and probes the reason for their linkage. Why does Shakespeare associate kites and bedding? "Perhaps," we are told, "the link is some death-scene which made a great impression on the poet's mind." Why does Falstaff, questioned by Hal as to when he last saw his knee, compare his youthful waist to an eagle's talon? The sub-conscious association of the knee and the eagle is explained. Why in *King Lear* do crows rather than gulls fly over Dover cliff? The crow is the symbol of death and "for Shakespeare symbolism was far more important than exact natural history." And we are led up to some revealing generalizations: that the components of the image clusters may be linked by "emotional significance, similarity of sound, or mere contiguity in the past"; that "if the muse visited Shakespeare with almost overwhelming power, it is no less certain that the inspiration was the outcome of the incubation of ideas on which he had concentrated earlier." As one example of the latter truth we are reminded that "years prior to Shylock's appearance on the stage, Shakespeare wrote

My sweet ounce of man's flesh! my incony Jew!"

The mixed quality of these cited snippets is fairly typical of Mr. Armstrong's methods and arguments. With much that is really suggestive, the book is marred by a waywardness and an uncritical simplicity. We cannot think that he has probed very deeply into the secrets of Shakespeare's imagination.

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## ONE WORLD?*

FRANK H. UNDERHILL

A reader whose intellectual activities have been mainly confined to the study of history and politics is left by this book with a depressing and

**The Meeting of East and West: An Inquiry concerning World Understanding.* By F. S. C. NORTHROP. New York: Macmillan [Toronto: Macmillan Co. of Canada]. 1946. Pp. xxiv, 531. ($7.50)

overwhelming sense of the deficiencies of his own education. A mere country mouse in Toronto can only marvel at the effortless ease with which these American professors acquire omniscience. The author here ranges over the whole history of philosophy and religion in the West and in the East; he explains how philosophic concepts of the nature of man and the universe worked themselves out in certain concrete social institutions from age to age and from continent to continent; he analyses the political and economic civilization of the United States, Britain, Mexico, Germany, China, India—and these chapters are filled with brilliant insights for the historian and political scientist; he discusses the meaning of the revolutionary situation in which we find ourselves; he gives, scattered amongst his philosophical and political disquisitions, a more illuminating account of what modern painting has been trying to do since the days of the Impressionists than can be found in any of the books by professional art critics known to this reader; and he rears this whole complex structure upon a knowledge of the development of mathematical physics from the days of the Greeks, through Galilei and Newton, to Einstein and Planck. Only a modern Aristotle would be competent to pass judgment upon such a work. In its impressive massing of knowledge this volume makes Arnold Toynbee look like a simple Oxford don chatting amiably about his fancies in some Senior Common Room after dinner.

Nevertheless the author evidently intends the book for the ordinary educated public of the English-speaking world. And assuming the mantle of Aristotle for the moment, I should say that it richly repays the effort necessary to read it through. Large sections of it are written in a difficult technical jargon, and it seems to lead up to the conclusion that what the world needs is precisely the philosophy of Professor F. S. C. Northrop as currently expounded in the lecture-rooms of Yale University. No doubt his fellow-philosophers will in due course explain to us the various shortcomings and confusions of this conclusion. In the meantime it is refreshing to see a philosopher returning to the original function of philosophy and trying to construct a comprehensive picture of the world from the data of the special sciences.

He proposes that we undertake to build One World in a much more complete and fundamental sense than has been dreamt of in the most far-reaching visions of politicians or economists. Behind the economic and political differences that divide our world he sees a mutual misunderstanding between cultures and civilizations such as can be removed only by a new philosophical formulation of the nature of man and the universe which shall embody what is best and most typical in each culture and shall be based upon the most recent scientific knowledge. The deepest cleavage, he believes, is not that between the systems of communism and Western democracy, which are both parts of the civilization of the West, but between this West and the Orient. Hence the title of the book, the Meeting of East and West; and the sub-title, an Inquiry concerning World Understanding.

The central thesis of the book is most brilliantly presented in the second chapter, which is a study of modern Mexico. Professor Northrop shows how Mexican culture is an expression of the intuitive aesthetic consciousness of the mixed Spanish and Indian peoples, standing out in contrast to the rational theoretic thinking that has dominated the intellectual development of Europe and North America. This chapter is exciting because it is concrete. The author gives us a series of pictures ranging from the remains of Aztec temples to the Virgin of Guadalupe, and to the contemporary paintings of Orozco and Rivera. And he brings out brilliantly the difference between this Mexican absorption in passionately felt aesthetic materials and our Anglo-Saxon concentration upon abstract scientific doctrine. This difference, he maintains, is also the difference between the West, which stems from Greek science and philosophy, and the East of Confucianism and Taoism, of Buddhism and Hinduism. The rest of his book is a development in detail of this thesis. By a comprehensive study of the main movements in Western and in Eastern thinking he tries to show what the difference amounts to and how it can be overcome in a new synthesis.

Knowing nothing about oriental philosophies I found most of the chapters in this part of the book incomprehensible. Experts in the subject, I gather, complain that Professor Northrop slides too easily over the differences among the various Eastern systems of thought. At any rate his main point is that they all have in common an emphasis upon the immediately apprehended aesthetic manifold, the undifferentiated aesthetic continuum. This makes them unreceptive both to Western nationalism and to Western theism; and Professor Northrop is doubtful whether the East can absorb the Christian religion without at the same time destroying its own unique intuitive aesthetic cultural values. His prose becomes most moving when he is dealing with the oriental or the Mexican way of life. "The Buddha's claims upon the lives of men are merely those of a mortal man who with the utmost realism calls attention to suffering and death while at the same time pointing out another factor in the nature of things and the practical consequences with respect to aesthetic appreciation, spiritual sustenance and emotional equanimity which the awareness and cultivation of its existence engenders. Need one wonder that this Buddha in spirit if not entirely in name has won the hearts and affections of more of the earth's inhabitants than any other religious spirit in the world?"

On the philosophy of the West, Professor Northrop explains how new scientific discoveries had by the seventeenth century made the old medieval and Greek conceptions of nature and man no longer tenable; how Locke worked out the implications of Newton's mathematics and how Locke's philosophy became the basis of our Anglo-Saxon social institutions and thinking; how this in turn was outdated by advances in mathematical science; and how the philosophy of Kant and the post-Kantians determined the characteristic qualities of the modern culture of Germany and Russia. These chapters contain a most penetrating and suggestive analysis of the

intellectual basis of our Western world. They are followed by a chapter on Roman Catholic culture and Greek science which would seem to this reader to provide a definitive answer from modern science to the claim that we can solve our current difficulties by going back to St. Thomas. Considering that Professor Northrop was one of the founders of the "Conference on Science, Philosophy and Religion" this chapter is a very refreshing one. For to judge from the volumes published under the auspices of that Conference, while its members announced annually that they were achieving a greater understanding and unity, what actually happened was that its scientific members read papers each on his own particular science, while its religious members went round steadily intoning a call for a return to religion as the only solution of the world's perplexities. It is difficult to see, if one accepts Professor Northrop's insistence that the new synthesizing philosophy must take account of the latest developments in Western theoretical mathematical physics on the one side and of the oriental concentration on the intuitive apprehension of the aesthetic continuum on the other, that there is any need for theistic religion at all.

This is a stimulating book, and a reader like myself who has no facility in the language of philosophy and no understanding of mathematics finds it difficult to explain how stimulating and suggestive the book has been to him. The obvious criticism of it is that the working-out of the new philosophic synthesis which is to join East and West must take a long time, even if another Aristotle were to appear in our day, and that in the present economic and political chaos of the world we cannot afford to wait for this slow philosophic solution. It is hardly fair to criticize the author because he has expressed himself as if the development of philosophy took place in an autarchic philosophic world separated from political and economic movements. But an historian becomes uneasy when he reads of medieval culture coming to an end because Thomistic and Aristotelian science could not explain Galilei's observations of the motions of projectiles through space; and he wants to intervene and point out that there were other determinants of the process besides new studies in mathematical physics. A political scientist would protest that a more important aspect of the modern unsatisfactory contacts between West and East than that of theoretic science confronting aesthetic intuition is that of imperialist powers exploiting colonial peoples. In fact historian and political scientist would both say that if the new philosophy sketched out by Professor Northrop ever does become part of our thinking it will win acceptance as an end product. It will be accepted as a new way of understanding man and the universe because in the meantime we have found a political and economic *modus vivendi* by which the peoples of West and East are managing to live together with a reasonable degree of amity. And a liberal, with his obstinate irrational prejudice in favour of diversity, would wonder whether such a pragmatic, ever newly adjusted, *modus vivendi* isn't about the best future for the world to which we ought to look forward.

THE VIKING PORTABLE LIBRARY VARIOUS AUTHORS

The Viking Portable Library series began with a collection of literary Americana called *As You Were*, made by Alexander Woollcott primarily for the American armed forces. It has since expanded into a remarkable publishing venture which now embraces over thirty volumes and is still growing. Its chief aim is to provide a large selection (the volumes average over 700 pages) of the work of a well-known writer in a book of a compact size which will sell for a relatively low price. The selections have generally been made by good critics, and the introductions, though unequal in merit, are often excellent. The bulk of the writers in the series are American, and include most of the standard American authors. The volumes are most valuable, of course, when most complete: *The Portable Dorothy Parker* comprises all of that author's published work, and *The Portable Scott Fitzgerald* contains his two best novels. On the other hand, Thomas Wolfe and D. H. Lawrence do not lend themselves so easily to being made portable, and a few, such as *The Portable Shakespeare*, which has only seven plays complete, will only encourage the pernicious habit of reading gigantic "anthologies" (whatever happened to the word "chrestomathy"?) instead of books, which is fostered by so many freshman survey courses in American colleges. But on the whole the conception and execution of the scheme are both admirable. In addition to the four discussed below, a *Portable Irish Reader*, a collection of Irish literature of all periods, and a *Portable World Bible*, selections from the sacred books of eight religions, may be noted.

NORTHROP FRYE

*The Portable Dante*. Edited and with an introduction by PAOLO MILANO. New York: Viking Press [Toronto: Macmillan Co. of Canada]. 1947. Pp. xlii, 662. ($2.50)

This compact little book, exceedingly well printed, with no crowding of the page, contains the translation of *The Divine Comedy* by Lawrence Binyon, complete, Rossetti's translation of the *Vita Nuova*, also complete, nine of the lyric poems (seven translated by Rossetti, two by Lyell and Grandgent), five extracts from the *De Vulgari Eloquentia*, seven from the *De Monarchia*, and parts of five of the *Epistles*, translated by Ferrers Howell and Wicksteed. The *Convivio*, which is inadequately described in "A Bibliographical Note," is not represented, and the *Eclogues* and the *Quaestio de Aqua et Terra* are also omitted.

The choice of Binyon's excellent translation of *The Divine Comedy* is certainly unobjectionable, but the editor's disparaging remarks about other translations (pp. xxxiii and 661) are regrettable. The notes to the *Comedy* are largely taken from Grandgent, but other useful notes are provided by the editor. Needless to say, there is no attempt to discuss difficult passages.

The other selections are sparsely annotated. The note on the sonnet *To Guido Cavalcanti* (p. 621) says that "her the thirtieth on my roll" is Beatrice, which is highly improbable.

The editor's introduction (pp. vii-xl) contains information on the life and works of Dante, a comparison of the traditional "scholarly" way of judging the *Comedy* with that of Mr. T. S. Eliot, followed by sensitive criticism of the three *Cantiche*, illustrating the preferred approach—that of relying on the personal impressions of the "perceptive reader." "Redeth the grete poet of Ytaille/That highte Dant, . . ." as Chaucer said who, it is true, was recommending the original rather than a translation.

J. E. Shaw

*The Portable Elizabethan Reader*. Edited and with an introduction by Hiram Haydn. New York: Viking Press [Toronto: Macmillan Co. of Canada]. 1946. Pp. xvi, 688. ($2.50)

The selections for this compact and convenient volume have been chosen to represent the literature and life of the Elizabethan age from some of the less hackneyed sources and to interest the general reader as much as the scholar. The editor has shown skill in representing the leading interests of the age—in theology, politics, ethics, the tradition of the humanities, the lore of science old and new, the voyages of discovery—as well as the aesthetic achievements in drama, prose, and poetry. Interpreting the limits of the Elizabethan age flexibly to include the total literary output of such writers as John Donne and Francis Bacon, the editor has taken the customary view of the period as one of transition from medieval a-priorism to the inductive methods of science, and his selections are especially designed to illustrate the awareness of new motives and tendencies in science, ethics, and politics, in an age still linked with the medieval past by its moral and theological preconceptions.

The selections appropriately begin, therefore, with a passage from Donne's *Ignatius His Conclave*, illustrating the "new horizons" of the age; and range through such topics as "the dream of power" (illustrated from the marginalia of Gabriel Harvey to a speech in the House of Commons by Francis Bacon); "the rise of protestantism" (Foxe's *Book of Martyrs* to Donne's *Sermons*); "the creed of the court" (*Astrophel and Stella* to *The Gull's Hornbook*); "the common man" (Nashe, Dekker, Deloney, and the broadside ballads); "the well of the past" (the historians and translators); "an age of song" (this last section aims to provide an adequate representation of a few poets—Wyatt, Ralegh, Campion, Jonson, Donne—rather than a sampling of many). The omission of Shakespeare is deliberate, since he is represented in another volume of this series and since, as the editor remarks, the present selection is pervaded throughout by the spirit of the great poet and dramatist.

The editor's introduction is a spirited attempt to interpret the age on the basis of the selections here offered. In a survey of such extended scope, there is abundant room for differences of emphasis. The present reviewer would not agree with the view taken of Montaigne as the spokesman for an empirical naturalism which was indeed read into his essays by some seventeenth-century *libertins* but which must surely have been foreign to the purpose of the advocate of "nature" as the authority of tradition and reason and which was, to all appearances at least, undiscerned by his Elizabethan readers; nor with the attribution to the Elizabethans of a newly awakened interest in the theory of *virtù* and the tactics of power politics, which seem to have been as familiar to Wolsey and Thomas Cromwell—or to More in the *Utopia*—as to Gabriel Harvey and Francis Bacon. But the editor's survey is a competent and stimulating study of a complex period which serves admirably to introduce his judicious selection from the representative literature of the age.

H. S. Wilson

*The Portable Blake.* Selected and arranged with an introduction by Alfred Kazin. New York: Viking Press [Toronto: Macmillan Co. of Canada]. 1946. Pp. xii, 713. ($2.50)

*The Portable Blake* gives all the best lyrics, the "minor" or shorter prophecies almost complete, good extracts from the letters and miscellaneous writings, and extracts from the three long prophecies. In addition there are the Job engravings and the passages relating to Blake from Crabb Robinson's diary, besides the editorial comment. One curious blunder is the printing of the marginalia without the original passages to which they refer even when the comment (e.g., "Well Said Enough!" or "Damned Fool!") does not stand alone. The Job series also carries only the leading biblical quotations underneath, and hardly suggests the conception of Job as an epitome of biblical symbolism which the variety of quotation in the original is designed to suggest. The extracts from the long prophecies are skilfully made, though from a purple-passage attitude towards them which I find unacceptable. The brilliant satire *An Island in the Moon*, which shows a unique side of Blake's genius, is the most conspicuous omission. The introduction attempts with fair success to give a sympathetic impression of Blake's personality, though it follows the enraptured-crank stereotype too closely, and avoids the deeper aspects of his thought altogether. The book can be recommended as a classroom text, as it is considerably cheaper than the complete one-volume *Poetry and Prose* edited by Keynes, from which its text is taken, and which presumably the serious student would prefer having.

Northrop Frye

*The Portable Emerson.* Edited by MARK VAN DOREN. New York: Viking Press [Toronto: Macmillan Co. of Canada]. 1946. Pp. 664. ($2.50)

In his *The Portable Emerson*, Professor Mark Van Doren has done a service to Ralph Waldo Emerson. Previous anthologies merely have dumped Emerson's essays and poems in chronological order into the hands of readers, inviting them to begin on page one with "Nature" which certainly is not the most lambent of Emerson's essays. Further, not all of his essays are equally meaningful to the present-day reader. Van Doren has made a selection of essays, poems, letters, and a part of the *Journals* to show Emerson at his most attractive—the prophet, homely but elegant, provincial but one-worldly, witty but serious, the supple mediator between what is and what could be, communicated to the reader in some of the liveliest English prose of this last one hundred years.

The editor wisely has abandoned the conventional chronological ordering of his essay selections, and has grouped them in three clusters, "Programs," "The Ways of Life," and "People." The first group, "Programs," includes "The American Scholar," the Divinity School Address, "Man the Reformer," "The Conservative," and "New England Reformers": five lectures delivered to five different kinds of Cambridge and Boston audiences during the early "flowering of New England," 1837 to 1844. The first essay here, "The American Scholar," was delivered before the Harvard Phi Beta Kappa Society exactly one hundred years ago (31 August); today many young Canadians might be jolted by its iteration that "we walk on our own feet, work with our own hands, and speak with our own minds." In this group the reader may miss the presence of the essays "Self-Reliance" and "The Over-Soul," but this anthology runs to 664 pages as it stands, and what Van Doren does print here clearly establishes Emerson's central principle—the self-reliance of the individual who has hitched his wagon to the Over-Soul.

The section "Programs" is followed by "The Ways of Life," ten essays in which Emerson discoursed on "the fact, and the facts of existence." This group includes among others "History," "Manners," "Politics," "The Comic," "The Tragic," and "Illusions." Not all of these ten have the rhetorical surge of the earlier essays; occasionally one is reminded that we are not trained to listen as long or as closely even to Emersons as were the audiences of one hundred years ago. Yet all these essays wear well; the thought has a high level of validity; the expression glances expertly and surprisingly between the poles of idealism and actuality; the abstractions are spiked richly with shirt-sleeve observations; the style has simplicity and strength: "Cut these words and they would bleed; they are vascular and alive; they walk and run. Moreover they who speak them have this elegancy, that they do not trip in their speech. It is a shower of bullets. . . ."

The third group of essays, "People," shows Emerson dealing with what was central to him—the individual. It consists of twelve out of nineteen chapters of *English Traits*, the character sketches of Montaigne, Mary Moody Emerson, Thoreau, Carlyle, and Burns, and also "Historic Notes of Life and Letters in New England." It is fitting that *English Traits* appears under "People" since essentially it is a study of the personal force of English individuals. Emerson's habitual mode of perception, which led him to see things in relationships, here is at its shrewdest and most delightful; his praise of any one aspect of the English also informs the reader of his silent criticism, and his evaluation of the English silhouettes his evaluation of the American, especially of the New England American. Thus in the individual character sketches too, the reader comes to know the rich multiplicities of the unity, Emerson.

In a fourth section, "Poems," the editor prints the cream of Emerson's poems, nineteen in all, ranging from the conventional "Concord Hymn" to the more typical tight-lipped verse which at its best might be mistaken for the gnomic lyrical work of Emily Dickinson.

Van Doren also reprints thirty-eight pages of a continuous section from the *Journals*, running from January to July, 1856, an extract which shows clearly why Emerson called his *Journals* his "savings bank."

The concluding section is a sampling of Emerson letters to Carlyle, to his aunt, Mary Moody Emerson, to his wife, and to Margaret Fuller. They are personal, ranging from the gaiety of Emerson in love to Emerson in the blackness of bereavement. This section also includes a glimpse of Emerson as an active citizen in his open letter to President Van Buren protesting the enforcing of the Cherokee Treaty.

This *Reader* achieves what Professor Van Doren claims for it: "The representative Emerson, the influential Emerson, gives way here to the man who at the moment is the most readable—at the moment, and, one may have the faith, for a long time to come."

GORDON ROPER

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## SHORTER NOTICE

*An Album of Dated Syriac Manuscripts.* By W. H. P. Hatch. Cambridge: Harvard University Press [Toronto: Saunders]. 1946. Pp. ix, 47, 200 plates. ($38.00)

This work by the Professor Emeritus of New Testament in the Episcopal Theological School, Cambridge, Mass., is another of this specialist's masterpieces in the field of Syriac and Greek manuscripts of the New Testament. Dr. Hatch's name has already been made famous by his *Greek and Syriac Miniatures in Jerusalem*, *Greek Manuscripts of the New Testament at Mount Sinai*, and his *Principal Uncial Manuscripts of the New*

*Testament*, and this his most recent work will add lustre to his fame, for it is not only an important subject but also one which is discussed and illustrated in the best manner of this expert's scholarly technique. It is a book for the New Testament textual expert and for every great technical biblical library in the world.

The two hundred facsimiles with their accompanying palaeographical description are preceded by a full introduction dealing with such matters as writing materials, pens, ink, styles of writing, forms of letters, and especially with such important problems as that of dating, and that of the periods in the history of Syriac handwriting.

The facsimiles, each of which reproduces a page of the original manuscript, show in part or in the whole the actual size of the letters as they were written by the scribes. Thus students of the original Syriac texts of the New Testament, instead of spending years, as Dr. Hatch has done, in visiting the various depositories of such manuscripts in many different parts of the world, can now sit comfortably in their own studies and libraries and familiarize themselves with all the problems of dates and values not only of these dated manuscripts but also of any other undated as well as dated Syriac manuscripts with which they may come in contact.

Dr. Hatch, the Harvard University Press, and the American Academy of Arts and Sciences (for which the album was published) have placed all students of the text of the New Testament under a deep sense of gratitude for this authoritative and handsome volume.

SAMUEL A. B. MERCER